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Transition to Higher Education in a College Assistance Migrant Program: Students' Perception of Purpose

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by

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Latina/o or Latinx: Refers to a person of Latin American origin or descent living in the United States. The term is gender-inclusive and is often used to describe individuals with cultural ties to countries such as Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and others in Central and South America.

Latinos/as: Refers to plural form of the above definition, i.e., a group of people with cultural ties to Latin America and includes individuals of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.

First Time in College (FTIC): A term used to describe students who are enrolling in college for the first time, typically after completing high school.

First Generation College Student: A term used to describe students whose parents or guardians did not complete a bachelor's degree or participate in formal higher education, and who are the first in their family to attend college.

Migrant farmworker: An individual who moves from place to place to perform agricultural labor, often in seasonal or temporary jobs, and in most cases is also not originally from the host country of employment / place of labor.

Migrant student: For purposes of this study, synonymous with students from migrant farmworker families or students of migrant background.

Third Culture Kids: Individuals who have spent a significant part of their developmental years in a culture that is different from their parents' culture, resulting in the formation of a third cultural identity that is neither their heritage culture nor host culture.

Purpose: Refers to a stable sense of direction or intention that guides/motivates individuals, is meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond self, and potentially provides a sense of meaning and fulfillment (Damon, 2003; Frankl, 1974).

Beyond-the-self purpose: Refers to a type of purpose that involves a desire to contribute to something greater than oneself, such as a social cause or a higher purpose.

Elaborative purpose: Refers to a deeper way of describing details surrounding or explaining purpose intentions, and often involves actively seeking out opportunities for growth or engaging in activities that align with personal values and goals.

Self-identified or Self-defined purpose: Refers to a purpose that individuals define for themselves based on their own values, interests, and goals, rather than external expectations or pressures.

Positive youth development: A strengths-based approach to youth development that emphasizes building competencies, skills, and assets to promote resilience and well-being.

Purpose-based interventions: Interventions that aim to help individuals develop and pursue as a means of promoting positive outcomes in various areas of life.

Logotherapy: A conceptual framework and psychotherapeutic approach that focuses on helping individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives, especially in the face of suffering and adversity.

Collegiate transition, transition to college / higher education: Refers to the process of adjusting to the academic, social, and emotional demands of college or higher education, normally from high school.

Exploratory study: A type of research study that seeks to explore a new topic or area of research in depth, often through qualitative or mixed methods.

Participatory research: A collaborative approach to research that involves active participation of participants in all or most aspects of the research process, such as research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Reflexive research: A type of research that emphasizes the role of the researcher in shaping and interpreting the research process and outcomes, which requires ongoing reflection and self-awareness.

Reflexive interviewing: A type of research method that emphasizes the role of the interviewer in shaping the interview process and outcomes, and requires both multiple ways of checking for participant understanding and ongoing reflection / self-awareness.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis: A type of qualitative data analysis that emphasizes the role of the researcher in shaping and interpreting emergent themes, and also requires ongoing reflection and self-awareness.

Pragmatism: In qualitative research, an approach that emphasizes the practical use of knowledge and focuses on understanding how knowledge is used or can be used in real-world contexts.

Auto-driven photo elicitation: A research method that involves participants taking and sharing photographs as a way to stimulate discussion and reflection on a particular topic or experience.

ABSTRACT

The 21st century world is increasingly globalized and interconnected, and migration is a reality that substantially impacts the US educational system, and often requires specialized services for migrant students to successfully transition to higher education. While higher education has many benefits, it also presents inherent risks and challenges for students from migrant families, whose academic and life experiences may be vastly different from traditional college students. Federal collegiate transition programs like the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) recognize this and aim to support students holistically throughout their transition to higher education. Such programs are in continual search of effective ways to understand and foster student success. Within the field of positive youth development, the study of self-identified or self-defined purpose has shown promise in helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds to flourish in terms of both social-emotional health and academic persistence. This is an exploratory study conducted with six Latina students from migrant farmworker families entering a new university living-learning community through the CAMP program. It explores these students' perceptions of their transition to college and the role purpose may play in it, using semi-structured interviews and a participant-driven photo elicitation technique. A modified reflexive thematic analysis revealed a number of emergent themes and findings. These included identification of purpose as a protective factor against adversity, and in particular beyond-the-self purpose areas such as serving one's community, advocacy for migrant farmworkers, and bringing financial stability to one's family. In addition, findings showed the bidirectional relationship of family support in transition to college, the importance of spiritual

life and critical role of CAMP‘s approach in meeting the students’ needs holistically. These needs included mentorship, goal setting, career exploration, service learning or work experiences oriented towards students’ purpose, and specialized academic tutoring/advising. These discoveries provide useful information that may assist parents, counselors, teachers, educational administrators and other stakeholders working with this unique student population.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of students from migrant farmworker families regarding their transition to an institution of higher education through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and the impact that students' sense of purpose has on their transition and ability to cope with challenges. In order to more clearly define this student population, I will use the CAMP program definition, in which students must be full-time, first year and first time in college (FTIC) students who meet at least one of the following three criteria: (a) Have worked for at least 75 days in the past 24 months as a seasonal/migrant farmworker, or who are the children of individuals who have worked at least 75 days in the past 24 months as a seasonal/migrant worker, (b) Have participated in a Title 1 Migrant Education Program or who are eligible to participate, or (c) Have qualified in the past and/or are currently qualified for the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Sec. 167* (CAMP, 2022). From this definition, I understand that a CAMP student participating in the study may either be a migrant farmworker themselves, or more likely be the child of a migrant farmworker, who was born in the United States or abroad. Most participants in the program are also first generation college students.

Migration has increased ten-fold over the past 50 years in industrialized countries, and it is widely acknowledged that educational systems have been slow to adjust, in particular those tasked with transition to higher education. In an increasingly interdependent and globalized world, first generation students from migrant families are a present and growing reality within

our educational systems, whose needs are not fully understood and whose interests have not been thoroughly addressed (McHatton et al., 2006; Taylor & Ruiz, 2019). The National Center for Farmworker Health estimated there were more than 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the US in 2021 making up 18% of the economy, of which nearly 70% were Mexico-born (NCFH, 2021). Children of migrant workers face unique challenges in our educational system, including language learning, lack of support networks/extended family, legal status concerns, and socioeconomic isolation (Mendez & Bauman, 2018).

Despite gains of Latinos across the board in US higher education, children of migrant workers face immense and unique academic challenges among this group; their parents' time-consuming work commitments allow little time for support of formal education, due to the intense physical and economically challenging work, children also must often contribute to household work and income in ways their peers do not (Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Green, 2003; Medez & Bauman, 2018; Ramirez, 2012; Zalaquette et al., 2007). These students experience multiple contextual risks and stressors which in turn often lead to poor adjustment and academic engagement, such as inability of traditional schools to meet flexible scheduling needs and transfer school records or credits across state lines (Taylor & Ruiz, 2019). Thus, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) created the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) in an effort to improve the transition experience for students from migrant families to undergraduate studies (CAMP, 2022). Through this USDE-administered grant each participating university across the country receives funds to implement the program, which is awarded every five years as host schools re-compete for funding at host institutions. Within the parameters of this program, the host university offers academic and career advising, tutoring, and social activities to provide a higher level of support and facilitate campus engagement for this group of

student (Ramirez, 2012).There are only approximately 40 universities across the country that receive grants to support a CAMP program, depending on allocated federal budget for that cycle (CAMP, 2022).

Parents value the qualities that multicultural exposure and multilingualism in the US provide, and often intentionally choose to migrate for their children, including their access to higher education (Platt et al., 1991; Cranston-Gingras, 2000). At the same time, programs like CAMP struggle to advocate for and demonstrate the value of such programs not just for the students they serve, but for the general student population at the university and society at large. This is because many of the benefits of cultural competence found in international migration and cross-cultural learning are not attributed to migrant students in the literature, as they are to such groups as *Third Culture Kids (TCKs*- youth who spend significant portions of their developmental years living and learning in non-heritage cultures), despite the obvious similarities in their experience. Migrant farmworker youth are comparatively understudied, experience more adversity and vulnerability, and are less likely to have clear paths to higher education, for numerous reasons (Free & Križ, 2021; Taylor & Ruiz, 2019).

TCKs and migrant students are both known to develop resilience, cross-cultural communication skills, flexibility and adaptability, as well as skill in working with those different from themselves. In the case of children of migrant farmworkers, complex demands on executive function proved to lead to greater dispositional resilience (positively associated with academic success), and these skills must be fostered intentionally and in culturally relevant ways to lead to academic mastery or efficacy (Taylor & Ruiz, 2019). In order to do so, higher education administrators and educators must become more aware of the lived experience of these students, and what motivates them in terms of goals and purpose for their education.

Purpose was originally described in the seminal work by Dr. Viktor Frankl as embodying an overarching goal or life task that acts as a compass in alignment with one's values and allows meaning-making of the past and while facing current existential challenges (Frankl, 1985). In more recent research conducted with students, purpose has been described as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once important to self and directed at making a difference in the world beyond the self" (Mariano & Valliant, 2012). Purpose *beyond-the-self* (BTS) is often associated with a prosocial element and can have a major impact on both academic outcomes and life path for students of diverse backgrounds (Tate et al., 2013; Yuen et al., 2017). Purpose can therefore act as a protective factor, by making meaning from suffering and existential challenges one faces on a day-to-day basis. Identifying a prosocial, self-transcendent purpose has also shown benefits academically (Yeager et al., 2014). The present study sought to understand students' perceptions of purpose in their own words**,** and to incorporate their unique backgrounds as migrant students.

There is limited qualitative research with regards to purpose and high school to college transition, and no research exists that I have found dealing with transition programs serving migrant students and understanding the role of purpose. This study therefore adds to the literature by exploring students' perceptions of their first year of transition to higher education, and what role purpose plays in it. It also sought to understand the contours and types of purpose orientation, including for example beyond-the-self and self-defined purpose. In this study I also show how participant-driven or auto-driven photo elicitation techniques can support participants as they seek to explain their purpose and transition process to higher education. Given the explicit need for rich information on the CAMP program participants' experiences, the concise purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand migrant student's transitions within

the context of purpose-orientation. Through a photo elicitation technique and semi-structured interviews with six purposefully selected students from migrant farmworker families, and a modified reflexive thematic analysis of their responses, I sought to answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

1) How do students from migrant farmworker families perceive their transition to college and what most impacts this transition?
2) How does a sense of purpose impact these students' experience in higher education, and how might college influence their purpose?
3) In what ways does the CAMP program itself facilitate successful transition to college, and development or deepening of purpose?

Significance

Several studies have quantitatively measured factors such as academic struggles, grief from loss and other difficulty with transitions to higher education among migrant students, but few have opened the discussion to explore and describe these emotions on an individual level balancing benefits and challenges in terms of life purpose, which can have lifelong effects (Ramirez, 2012; Green, 2003; Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Zalaquette et al., 2007). Specifically, to date there is no research that looks at transition to higher education and life purpose expressions of students taking part in migrant student programs such as CAMP. In addition, no studies exist which have drawn parallels between the TCK population and migrant student population in terms of purpose and relative protective factors, including contributions to their learning communities. This research is highly relevant to institutions and federally funded programs like CAMP as it better explains migrant students' transition. It also draws out the most salient and

meaningful factors affecting that transition due to their unique multicultural/multilingual status, and impact upon academic and social life. Furthermore, students from migrant backgrounds make up an ever-growing contingent of US higher education, while institutions continue to invest relatively little in outside of programs like CAMP. Without in-depth case studies, such institutions will neither be cognizant of the obstacles this population faces, nor aware of all the strengths and benefits this population potentially brings to their them. In order to identify which factors, enable students to utilize these skills, one must explore how they are similar to and different from other multinational student populations exposed to multiple moves and existing in multi-lingual environments. For example, one may discover cognitive benefits are passed on to peers through interaction, and cultural competency is augmented in the entire student population. Furthermore, if certain protective factors are ignored among students of migrant farmworker families due to class distinction or parental support, educational institutions and students themselves miss the opportunity to benefit from this rich cultural integration.

It is important to understand what role purpose plays in migrant student transitions to higher education, in order to understand what factors might impact their success as compared to other populations. In the case of this qualitative study, I explored if a sense of purpose and meaning-making is being effectively activated within the CAMP program, or through some other means, and if purpose-based ideation beyond-the-self is present, in the data from each participant. In addition, I sought to explore the question: Was this sense of purpose present upon entry to university or has it developed during their time at institution through the CAMP program, or a combination of both? Formally CAMP performance is measured by retention of students and number of students that continue (enroll) in coursework their second year (Ramirez, 2012). Informally, it is also measured in the social emotional health and interconnected agency

between a student's studies and their future goals, and this is where purpose is most at play. The significance of purpose as a protective factor and harbinger of academic success is part of this, but not the complete picture. This sought to reveal additional benefits that purpose orientation brings to migrant students in collegiate transition, through an in-depth series of data gathering techniques. Interviews were offered to be conducted bilingually as needed, and questions posed in both Spanish and English. However, participants felt comfortable expressing their experiences and perspectives in English. A few phrases that were better expressed in Spanish were defined or explained within text next to their narrative. I therefore attempted to integrate aspects of culture and cultural terms through written interaction, an arts-based research technique of photo elicitation, and group semi-structured interviews in this exploratory study.

I believe the discoveries made or findings uncovered together (participants and I) provide a useful perspective and information to assist parents, counselors and teachers that work with migrant students during this highly transitional phase in their lives, including the impact of different purpose orientations, or lack thereof. The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at a major research university in the southeast US is responsible for providing services which aid in the transition of approximately 30 students per year to higher education from secondary education. In the past academic year, this program facilitated 28 students successfully completing the first year of college of the 30 students admitted, of which 27 continued on to their second year of higher education (CAMP, 2021). Institutions of higher education and indeed the federal government seek to know what allows such students to thrive, and what factors most impact their successful transition and persistence as students. In the area of research conducted about migrant students' persistence specifically, purpose has received little to no attention, despite it being shown to be a determinant of academic success and persistence among students.

At this institution specifically, CAMP has existed for intermittently over two decades and focuses on the following in services to students: assistance with application processing for admissions, financial aid, and housing; personalized tutoring and academic advising; student advocacy and health services; as well as a mentorship program and assistance in all manner of the transition experience to college (CAMP, 2022).

The study relied upon semi-structured interviews (both an individual interview and focus group interview with all participants present) to welcome insight from open-ended questions in co-constructing knowledge (Patton, 2015), in combination with a reflexive auto-driven photo elicitation technique (Harper, 2002; Heisley & Levy, 1991; Harrington & Schibik, 2003; Papenta, 2011). Heisley and Levy (1991) developed the auto-driven component of photo elicitation from participants for qualitative data (photos decided upon and taken by themselves); This reduces researcher bias by allowing participants to not just explain their ideas through visuals in an interview, but also control the process of taking and selecting these representational photos, and thus better control the narrative in the interview. This method also has the added benefit of fostering negotiation of meaning through various interpretations of the photographs and communicating about each one.

Auto-driven photos also allow participants to increase their own voice and authority in interpreting their lives, social context and perspective to share meaning with outsiders, such as researchers (Lapenta, 2011; Blom et al, 2020). This technique has been used with students to capture early impressions of college life, by Harrington and Shibik (2003), and was found to be particularly useful in illustrating impressions about transition to higher education (p. 30). It has also been utilized in positive youth development studies exploring purpose in the field of educational psychology (Blom et al, 2020). In the former case, the researchers a) first conducted

photo-elicitation based interviews, then b) focus group interviews in which students could discuss photographs with others, find common perceptions and themes from their shared experiences (Harrington and Shibik, 2003). Notably, the students reported that contributions from one another were helpful in finding common themes about the institution and the transition process itself.

Photograph creation or selection, and choice of presentation/arrangement is an artistic process. Arts-based materials for reflection also "stimulates autobiographical remembering, allowing participants to construct their stories and emotions in non-verbal and verbal modes" (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014, p. 3). Researchers have demonstrated effectiveness of arts-based research such as collage and photos elicitation in working specifically with third culture kids (TCKs), as a means to draw out latent emotions and recollect cultural experiences which impacted them (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014). Due in part to the aforementioned parallels of TCKs with migrant students, photo elicitation may also prove a fruitful method of inquiry for the participants in this study. Lastly, the students had the opportunity to engage in photo selection or photography as a means to tell their own stories, narrating motivational and affective aspects of memories that emerge in their own words (Harrington & Schibik, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

Resilience and Purpose in Positive Youth Development

A purpose framework within positive youth development allows me to discuss students' experience in higher education through the lens of their own values and explore how they make meaning from their own experiences, whether these are perceived as positive or negative. Goals and future hopes to serve or give back to their community, families and the world are all part of a sense of purpose, which allows one to make meaning from difficult life circumstances and

integrate one's values into higher pursuits (Frankl, 1974). Purpose-based positive youth development can be traced to Dr. Viktor Frankl's original work on purpose, which posits that making or finding meaning in all of our human experience is key to positive development, and that one might accomplish this by orienting towards a higher purpose, or a purpose beyond-the-self. There is a broad array of qualitative and quantitative research which demonstrates a connection between psychological health and purpose (Damon et al., 2003), as well as more specific connection of life purpose to beliefs about self-efficacy and college student retention (DeWitz et al., 2009).

A purpose framework is especially useful in making meaning from suffering and trauma, which identifies how life is calling the individual to respond, including our response-ability to life circumstances and conscience (Frankl, 1974). Students facing difficult tasks and academic transitions may benefit from a *beyond-the-self* or *self-transcendent* life purpose (Koshy & Mariano, 2012; Yeager et al., 2014; Yuen et al., 2017). Furthermore, purpose-based interventions have been effective in helping young people overcome substantial social difficulties and traumatic experiences (Kang et al, 2009; Yuen et al, 2017). On the flip side, students who identify as purposeless are at risk of a variety of social and psycho-somatic ailments, including depression and isolation (Damon, 1995). Purpose-based positive youth development work and purpose interventions thus may be helpful to youth of migrant farmworker families who have experienced multiple transitions and relationship instability. One means to come to terms with these experiences is working towards a self-identified purpose in alignment with their values (Blom et al., 2020). More detailed analysis of purpose research is provided in Chapter 2 of this study, with regards to related constructs and how purpose has been measured in quantitative and qualitative studies.

Ecological Systems Theory and Third Culture Kids

Youth transitions can also be assessed comprehensively via an ecological approach, which includes their home environment, community, school and society which impacts them. This is particularly useful as I seek to understand the multifaceted nature of a particular individual with migrant background, in which I must consider multiple influences of culture and identity intersectionality as part of students' transition to higher education. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory includes the most important interactions between individuals and their environment and deepens our understanding of these interactions by adding layers or levels of environment, from micro (home environment) to macro (larger culture). This is also useful when seeking to understand the migrant student context and how it might change in transition to college. This includes how different systems which I don't immediately see or consider might affect a learner, and how various facets of their life interact with others to influence overall development. An example would be how family culture and heritage language might interact with larger academic community and educational systems not designed with them in mind.

Migrant students are often a transient population, and even when grounded in one place are straddled between two cultures, their parents' home country or heritage culture and their home, where most migrant farmworker children are born or arrived at a young age. Pollock and Van Reken's (2010) *Third Culture Kids* framework describes several important facets and shared experiences of TCKs that may also apply to migrant students. Two dominant but distinctly different experiences were discovered, based upon decades of research, which summarized that there are various costs and benefits of cross-cultural living experiences and high mobility. Gould, Van Reken and Pollock (2002) also found these realities to be most salient across two major

challenges: 1) developing a sense of identity may be difficult with extended cross-cultural living, and 2) resolving the grief and loss from relationships disrupted by high mobility. These relationships are ones which we often associate with creating emotional stability and mentorship learning (e.g., teachers, coaches, close friends and family). When these important relationships of guidance are lost or in question, a young person's development (psycho-spiritual, emotional and social trajectory) must find a way to replace, compensate and cope with change in these most pivotal roles.

Leaving one's home community and culture also comes with some costs, which both migrant educators and TCK researchers have discovered; including most notably in the area of relationships, spiritual development, social-emotional development and community building (Escamilla, 2014; Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; McHatton, 2006; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). The concept of privilege of course applies to TCKs in ways that it does not typically to students from migrant families, who may not have the same access to resources, parental education levels and career status, but who nonetheless are often multilingual and have lived in many diverse and transitory cultural environments during their upbringing. The concept of parental choices and resources has a great deal to do with the application of privilege to one group and lack thereof in another (Free & Kriz, 2022). While the potential benefits of a multilingual, multicultural upbringing apply to both of these groups of students, psychologists, counselors and educators have in recent decades acknowledged the toll that frequent moves and outsider social status takes on human development, and especially social-emotional stability (McHaton et al., 2006; Pollock, 2010).

Not surprisingly, researchers with both migrant students and TCKs find that parents and mentors are the most consistent relationships that promote protective factors shielding their

children from adversity, and providing continuity; however this nuclear family perspective is often insufficient and vulnerable to stressors (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Gilbert, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). Additional stress is added in the case of migrant families, who often face difficult economic and life circumstances that demand separation from family members for extended periods of time, and existential suffering due to work and living conditions (Zalaquette et al., 2007; Ramirez, 2012).

Bilingual Learners and Mentorship

Mentorship or mentor support is another area of scholarship which has considerable depth in research with Latino/a college students in the US, including specifically first year students (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005). Considering the exploratory case study design and mentorship, the CAMP program potentially fills some of these roles for migrant students, in providing multiple levels of advising, social-emotional support and peer mentors who have been through the program. Therefore, the study also sought to understand how such support is provided programmatically, and why this may or may not play a part in students' successful transition to higher education.

Lastly, a pragmatic perspective within the field of linguistics necessitates an exploration of the experience of bilingual learners, which is key to understanding the nuance of transition that migrant students experience, and the various code-switching behavior that they must engage in cognitively in order to be successful at the university level, socially and academically (Auer, 2010; 2013; Woolford, 1983). Pragmatism in linguistics also focuses on how language is used as a tool: on phonological, semantic, syntactic, as well as the pragmatic functions of language, which includes why and how code switching can help students succeed and grow academically (Martinez, 2010; McSwan, 2014; Montes-Alcala, 2000). This perspective could lend insight to

this study on migrant student transition as it also incorporates the importance of culture, social context, usage, and the communicative functions. Most students entering a college assistance migrant program face obstacles and opportunities in all of these areas, and at the same time have additional linguistic resources to draw upon which are often overlooked in a deficit-based view of education.

Positionality

I have worked in various capacities with CAMP programs and have tutored or mentored students from migrant farmworker families at two institutions of higher education and served as a teacher in migrant communities for nearly a decade of my career. I also identify as a (now adult) TCK, in which I was educated abroad during significant parts of my formative years. I have attended international schools in Mexico, Canada and Germany, and dealt with many changes during my youth in terms of educational institutions, cultural adjustments, language learning, relationship transitions and geographic moves. Finally, I am a trained logotherapist and retreat chaplain, focusing at various points in my professional life on purpose as a means for interpreting experiences and dealing with existential dilemmas or suffering.

The nature of a qualitative study using participant-driven or auto-driven photo elicitation and semi-structured interview methods is to draw out themes and analyze them in the light of the research questions but is not necessarily limited to them. Therefore, this study is not intended to draw generalizations only, nor even to infer how a sense of purpose and the CAMP program impacts such students across the board, but rather is designed to explore the spectrum of collegiate transition and self-described purpose among this particular group of students participants and understand them in a descriptive and qualitative way. My own experience in

migrant communities adds perspective to my understanding and rationale for conducting this research.

Summary

In this study, I sought to understand how students of migrant farmworker background perceive their transition to higher education, as part of a collegiate assistance migrant program (CAMP). In alignment with the research questions, I also sought to understand which factors might impact their transition relative to peers based upon students' own perceptions, including self-identified purpose, and how this might impact both academic and social adjustment to higher education, academic success and persistence as part of the CAMP program. The results of this study may serve both practitioners and institutions supporting migrant students, by understanding various protective and risk factors in students' first year transition experience from their own perspective.

The following chapter provides important context for understanding this unique population of students, their comparative peer groups, and literature which already exists on the above topic. It examines (a) recent studies evaluating the impact of CAMP programs (including federal and state annual reviews); (b) qualitative and quantitative studies addressing migrant student transition to college, including risk and protective factors; and (c) also provides a brief background of the literature on purpose, and specifically how purpose may be expressed in college students, e.g., affecting educational outcomes and reframing challenges students may face. Purpose research is relevant to both transition to higher education and college student success. The literature explores types of purpose and associated constructs. In the literature review, I also identify the gap which exists with regards to students of migrant farmworker families as compared to other first year students and marginalized student populations. Lastly, in

the review I identify the most salient factors in their transition, according to multiples sources of data.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following chapter I present a narrative review of literature focusing on the factors affecting students of migrant farmworker background in their transition to higher education, and their persistence as a result of programs like the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). I also investigate the potential relevance and application of *purpose* to these first-year students, including students of diverse and multilingual/multinational backgrounds. I have endeavored to integrate theoretical concepts with empirical findings; however, I am under no pretense of this review being "comprehensive" (Maxwell, 2006). The literature review should be a dynamic process in conversation with the ultimate research aims and research questions (Boote & Beile, 2005). I aim to pursue a narrative literature review *that is* confined by the topical questions below, but not to a specific field (i.e., linguistics, educational psychology or education).

In terms of conceptual framework, I review the literature from a certain lens as an educational psychologist trained in applied linguistics (second language acquisition) and bilingual ESOL/ESE professional, and I apply a resilience framework to assess risk and protective factors. However, the review does not intentionally limit my reading on college student transitions to this lens or framework. Similarly, I did not limit the review of the first year in college experience and persistence to the CAMP program alone, but to integrate research on factors which might influence migrant students in their first year of higher education.

In this review, I utilized ERIC (ProQuest), JSTOR and Education Source, as well as those works referenced by prominent authors in their field, as well as reviewing CAMP program materials. This review includes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, and

includes conceptual/theoretical concepts as they are relevant to understanding transition programs for students from migrant farmworker families, and purpose in college students. It is limited to approximately the last two decades (since 2000), barring the aforementioned theoretical or seminal works that necessitate inclusion.

I organize the review thematically using the study's research questions as guideposts, and the aforementioned frameworks to review both questions separately, then draw them back together in the conclusion section, with suggestions for future research. In each section the relevant research, theory and gaps therein are highlighted. I interweave the contributions current research makes to first generation Latino/a students in their college transition, and specifically attempt to synthesize diverse studies relevant to students of migrant farmworker backgrounds.

Some of the keywords I used in this search included *College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Latino/a college persistence and retention, migrant students* and *students from migrant farm worker families.* Also included were *college student purpose, purpose profiles, purpose in college, and purpose interventions*. Regarding the former topic and first research question, I looked in particular at the empirical work on collegiate transition and first year experience within this student population. Research on students of color and bilingual first time in college (FTIC) student populations may also overlap with students from migrant farmworker families and are therefore included in the literature review where relevant, however students from migrant farmworker families also have unique assets and risk factors in their adjustment to college. Notably, in the review of literature outlined below, I was unable to identify a single study or theoretical work which looked at purpose among students of migrant farmworker background, or which applied purpose interventions with students in a CAMP program, or other programs assisting students from migrant farmworker families.

College Assistance Migrant Program

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) is a federally funded program whose goals focus on improving access to post-secondary education and providing support for students of migrant farmworker families, in order to increase retention rates in the first year of college (CAMP, 2022). The persistence rate is the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year (and can also refer to persistence to degree completion), while the retention rate is the percentage of students who return to the same institution for their second year (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022). CAMP serves approximately 2,000 students each year, across approximately 40+ institutions of higher education in the United States (CAMP, 2022). It has been largely successful even beyond its mission, in that it has enabled those students participating to persist until graduation at the same rate as their peers (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). In addition, migrant students participating in CAMP were able to outperform all other Latino/a student groups on baccalaureate degree attainment (Ramirez, 2012).

In studies of the program to date, CAMP has been particularly effective at helping students develop academic skills and transition to college holistically, including setting occupational or career goals, and finding ways to pursue them in college (Bejaranjo & Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Genareo et al., 2021; Ornelas-Gonzalez, 2010; Valverde, 2012). Of note in the CAMP charter is that it is also tasked with supporting the families of these students, and addressing the student holistically, but with only limited follow-up services after their first year (CAMP, 2022). CAMP is roundly touted as a success as its participants continue to a second year at a higher rate than the national average in the U.S. (US Department of Education, 2018). This leads us to question what key factors promote such success, and what more needs to be addressed for students transitioning to college within such a program.

Resilience as a Framework

A resilience framework is useful in this review to analyze the potential contributing factors in student persistence/retention, noting which are most likely to impact students in the CAMP program positively (protective factors), or make them more vulnerable to disengagement/leaving college (risk factors). Resilience as theory posits that there is interaction between these multiple interrelated factors, which might influence an individual throughout their academic career and lives, and these are in turn influenced by the environment and systems surrounding the student (Luthar et al., 2000; 2015). Resilience can also be understood as the process of balancing an equation, in which factors which make an individual vulnerable to risk are on one side, and factors which protect them from it on the other; the resulting balance of risk factors and protective factors contribute to outcomes later in life (Scheier, 2020; Werner, 1995; Wrosh & Richardson, 2002). The *Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency* refers to this neutral balance point as *Biopsycho-spiritual Homeostasis* (Richardson, 2002). In the case of the CAMP program, students from migrant farmworker families are exposed to unique stressors and risk factors which threaten to tip this balance, which will be covered in more detail in the following section. How one copes (or reintegrates) is highly dependent on the aforementioned protective factors (e.g., family, community, support services) and one's internal response to this disruption (e.g., spirituality, attitude, behavior).

In practical terms, how the equation balance is dependent upon both students' personal attributes as a student (e.g., self-regulation) and factors in their environment (e.g., tutoring). The ability to respond to risk factors can be developed over time, to cope with adversity and overcome new challenges, which as a personal attribute is generally called *resilience* (Luthar et al., 2015; Werner, 1995). Ideally, this occurs through practicing behavior regulation and learning

new skills, which in turn builds autonomy or confidence to deal with future challenges (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). This normally involves setting attainable goals (often with scaffolding or community/mentor support) and practicing persistence, skills that bridge or college transition programs like the College Assistance Migrant Program focus on (CAMP, 2022). These resilience development goals highlight the tension between persistence and disengagement, and a resilience framework can allow researchers to weigh factors which lead to different outcomes (leaving college or persistence, for example). For certain students, a positive response may in fact be to disengage (e.g., leave a particular major or program) and pursue more meaningful academic goals, whereas when a goal is reasonable and attainable, seeing progress fosters motivation and continued engagement (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020).

Some approaches to resilience as a framework assess this balance at the individual level (e.g., highly competent individuals achieving goals despite adversity), while others take a more systems-oriented approach, such as *main effect/interactive models* (Wright, Masten & Naryan, 2013). Interactive models seek to assess the interrelation between the risks (vulnerable factors) and protective factors, in order to understand their various outcomes. Lastly, the b*io-social-ecological model* of resilience accounts for proximal and distal factors within a systemic approach, including:

1) Contextual and cultural moderation- locally defined and culturally unique contexts influence response to stress and adversity,
2) Resource availability- children's development and response to risks in their environment is mitigated by resources available to them, and
3) Equifinality- indicates that many equally viable proximal processes can be associated with well-being (Ungar et al., 2013).

High School to College Transition

CAMP recruits and enables students to attend college through a federal grant and institutional partnerships. This preparation begins while still in high school, and continues during the summer before their freshman year, attempting to wrap a support structure around the student and scaffold difficult phases of college entrance and transition to higher education. Relationships between teachers, school counselors and program recruiters were found to be the most salient factor in students' application to college in one study (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009). This included those mentors' own identities as academically successful Latino/a Americans in many cases, who were themselves often children of migrant farmworkers. This identity naturally increases their ability to serve as role models and build bridges between two worlds, reducing fear and feelings of alienation in the college transition process (Genareo et al, 2021; Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009).

To understand high school graduation and students' transition to college among this group, some baseline statistics are necessary. There are approximately 2.4 million farmworkers in the United States, who have children numbering an additional 1.5 million, and according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only 31% of farm worker families are high school graduates and fewer have "some college education" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2019). Approximately half of all migrant farm workers drop out of high school (Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program, 2022). The vast majority of farmworkers are foreign born (75%), however the majority of their children are born in the U.S. and are citizens. In terms of ethnic identity, according to the National Center for Farmworker Health, 83% of farmworkers in the United States identify as Hispanic, and 65% self-report being Latino/a of Mexican ethnicity (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2020). However, spending one's entire childhood in

the U.S. does not equate to adequate educational resources, due to the rural and transitory lifestyle of many farmworker families. It is important to note that despite these barriers to higher education, students and their families generally value education and have a strong sense of determination as parents recognize higher education is their children's pathway to success (Alvarez-Mchatton et al., 2006).

Students from migrant farmworker families may have lower GPAs, testing scores, and opportunities to take advanced coursework, as they transfer between schools often or have to take time away from school and are thus less competitive when applying to college (Cranston-Gingras, 2000; Gonzalez, 2015). It is not uncommon for high school students in migrant farmworker families to contribute when there is high seasonal need and miss time in school, not to mention contact with guidance counselors and preparation of college applications (Escamilla, 2016; Martínez-Matsuda, 2020). Furthermore, the temptation to directly enter the workforce is compounded by families living below the poverty line, as the high school student matures and becomes physically capable (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2020). In longitudinal studies, researchers also found that first generation Latina/o students do not regularly seek out academic advising or trust such authority due to past negative experiences, thus making it unlikely they would turn to advisors in times of crisis (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). This is why early contact and advice from mentors in the migrant farmworker community and at established programs within universities is part of the CAMP program and transition process.

Strategies and protective factors for a CAMP student transitioning from high school to college should include parent outreach programs, formal mentoring programs, continuity of schooling, staff who are trained in multicultural practices, recruitment/training of diverse

teachers, and increased scholarship/financial aid awards at the recruiting institution (Zalaquett et al., 2007).

There is also a widening college readiness gap that exists for non-native speakers, determined by those needing ESOL services in high school, with academic writing scores and standardized testing lagging most prominently behind their peers (Lewis & Brown, 2021). Due to low enrollment and limited budgets, rural high school education often has limited or no bilingual services and lacks bridge programs to higher education (Coady, 2020). As such, transition or bridge programs like CAMP also provide tutoring in these key areas, and advocate for admissions of students that may not be accepted based solely upon standardized testing and essays (Escamilla, 2020). Students typically are unable to advocate for themselves in college applications without guidance, and parents often lack the resources and experience to navigate this process as well (Barglowski, 2018). In terms of parental aspirations, while parents typically have high aspirations for their children's education, "what is missing in parents' aspirations are concrete steps that would ensure the transition to postsecondary education", and the parents' understanding of the postsecondary landscape, how to select and apply for colleges (Langenkamp, 2019, p. 232).

CAMP's Focus: The First Year of College

Program and institutional factors are among the most compelling factors impacting retention and persistence among first generation Latina/o students. Specifically, researchers have been able to identify the following: precollege characteristics, self-efficacy, academic resilience and relative school connectedness, as well as some environmental factors affecting academic success such as culturally responsive advising and access to bilingual services (Clayton et al., 2019; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). Latina/o acceptance rates to college and persistence to

graduation are much lower than the general population, which may be due to a combination of factors such as financial, work and family obligations (Torres, 2004; Tovar, 2015). On the other side, the aspiration to help family members may also be a protective factor which promotes persistence among students of migrant farmworker background (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Specifically for students such as those enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program, many other obstacles exist, including a dearth of first generation and bilingual Latina/o role models and mentors, lack of transition support programs in universities at large, and financial resources (Escamilla, 2019; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Nora, 2011). This may be due to the fact that institutions are not set up to accommodate the needs of migrant students, or that they feel isolated among peers who come from very different backgrounds, even among Latina/o students. In addition, common risk factors which may affect Latina/o students in general are exacerbated in migrant farmworker communities: first-generation American and first-generation student status, socioeconomic status, and academic preparedness (Crisp & Nora, 2010).

The CAMP program has enabled on average 81% of their students (considered an at-risk population from the outset) to continue to the second year of study, their primary retention goal (Willison & Jang, 2009). *At-risk* is a term that incorporates a large spectrum of learning barriers students face which may need to be addressed in order to allow for academic success and transition to college (Horton, 2015), and students from migrant farmworker families fall into this category for a number of reasons, from poverty to language barriers and limited academic preparation (Nieto & Garcia, 2021). Interventions, mentoring and academic scaffolding may help mitigate the above risk factors through a transition program like CAMP (Araujo, 2011; Bejarano & Valverde, 2012; Escamilla, 2019). Academic skills and limited academic English in particular place students from a migrant background behind peers when they enter as a first-year student

(Gandara & Contreras, 2010; Nuñez & Gildersleeve, 2016). Their coursework is much more demanding than in high school, and these collegiate expectations can be overwhelming when coupled with other family expectations. Students of migrant farmworker background report being plagued by stress, anxiety and depression that result from displacement from their support system and massive expectations of being the first in their family to attend college (Garza, 2016; Mejía & McCarthy, 2010; Torres, 2004). The outlet which they normally rely upon (community, family and friends) often do not have the tools or experiential perspective to help with this transition and support them in meaningful ways, which is why programs like CAMP are necessary to fill the void (Nieto & Garcia, 2021). In one recent study, CAMP students had completion rates far above their peers in the community college setting (Nieto & Garcia, 2021), and the study called for follow-up qualitative data as to which services had empowered the students to succeed in their own view.

Another recent case study of a CAMP program offers insight into the programmatic factors which have been most valuable to students in coping with the above risk factors, and it assesses advising, tutoring, faculty partnerships and other supports (Genareo et al., 2021). Their evaluation at the end of several successive years of program evaluation calls for the following recommendations: maintaining consistent communication through frequent check-ins, establishing and encouraging peer tutoring, developing strong faculty partnerships, and establishing evaluation protocols (Genareo et al, 2021). While individual program assessments and case studies are valuable, there is a significant gap in the research in terms of what promotes first year success across the diverse contexts of CAMP programs, which would require analysis of comparative data at the federal level. In addition, some CAMP programs have much higher persistence and graduation rates than others in their same region, therefore a study which works

across campuses of comparable size and types of institutions would shed light on which program factors are working and should be replicated, and which are less desirable.

Living Learning Communities

Institutions receiving CAMP grants have sought to focus on building learning communities that address the intended academic, social, and personal success opportunities to its participants in fulfilling the grant (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012; Genarero et al, 2012). Learning community and academic community integration is another key potential vulnerable or protective factor for students of migrant farmworker backgrounds. In particular for students of color or those from marginalized communities, residential learning communities or learning communities provide interactions that are otherwise not available and have lasting positive effects on retention, as well as other academic outcomes (Anderson & Blankenberger, 2020; Spanierman et al, 2013).

Living learning communities (LLCs) specifically can further assist the first-year student in conceptualizing how their goals and perceived purpose may fit in a future career and professional community (Dunn & Dean, 2013), and promote both academic and social engagement for minority student populations (Wolaver & Finley, 2020). In addition, belonging to a learning community has been shown to help validate values, identity and formulate goals for underrepresented, low-income and first-generation students; Retention and persistence into the third semester, as well as sixth semester GPA, were higher as a result of LLC participation (Anderson & Blankenberger, 2020). This may be attributed to the positive effects associated with mentorship and students from diverse backgrounds seeing role models and peers they can relate to who have been successful in the chosen collegiate environment or academic field (Genareo et al., 2021).

There is a gap in the research in terms of what aspects of the learning community or living learning community (LLC) are most valuable for student persistence and retention across different types of universities. For example, is commuting from home as a CAMP student detrimental to building an integrative learning community, and do on-campus students have greater success in the program? If so, what factors are most impactful, that might be replicated for those students who cannot stay on campus?

Models of Persistence and Retention

Tinto (1993) proposed a theoretical model called the *Model of Institutional Departure*, to assist educational researchers in understanding the first-year collegiate experience and why students drop out, in particular with regards to students' goals, commitment, integration and other institutional factors which may impact persistence. This model highlighted how a difference in values between the student and their new college system might inhibit critical relationship building and support (Tinto, 1993). Using this model, Woolsey and Miller (2009) found that institutional commitment (a form of social integration and beyond-the-self aspirations) was the most important marker in predicting academic standing and retention at the end of the first year. Reporting being part of an academic community and supported by that community directly impacts retention, and both academic integration and institutional commitment have been shown to positively impact GPA, among first year students (Woolsey & Miller, 2009; Anderson & Blankenberger, 2020). Tinto (2003) later investigated how learning communities might address multiple aspects of the above model, including isolation and non-engagement in the first year of studies. Purpose orientation is one factor related to Tinto's (1993; 2003) own goals and commitments among first year students and will be explored in more depth in the following section.

The *Model of Student Attrition* and *Student Retention Model* helped researchers and educational practitioners to identify psychosocial factors that impact students, including motivation and goals (Bean, 2000; Bean & Easton, 2006), as well as several aspects of motivation that could include meaning-making from current and past experiences. In some ways similar to resilience frameworks, Bean (2000) found that students develop adaptive strategies in order to fit into their new college environment, and how successful their integration determined their decision to persist in school. Using this model in part, Hernandez and Lopez (2019) identified potential "leaks in the pipeline" leading to higher education and persistence for Latinos/as, which included consideration of the following socio-cultural factors:

- Immigration status- immigration status of parents and students may influence choices of student to attend or remain in college,
- Ethnic identity- an important part of self-concept, also incorporating linguistic identity and bilingualism, often making a choice between integration and assimilation (relinquishing of cultural identity),
- Gender roles- defining relationship expectations, occupational choice or field of study acceptability and women limited by expectation of who will care for parents,
- Community orientation- involvement, communal ties and responsibilities, and
- The role of religion- not heterogeneous practicing Catholics, as many institutions and stakeholders assume.

Persistence/Retention Models and CAMP Students

Students' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors also play a role within a distinct local context. Mirroring many of the services offered by the CAMP program for students, this model suggests several ways to reinforce student attitudes and beliefs: peer counseling, student orientation,

advising, supportive environments, and faculty informal interactions (Bean & Easton, 2006). These may also be understood as protective factors, dependent upon the student responses and support provided by an institution or college transition program. For example, one might include a protective factor *valuing of family life* and relying on family for emotional support, whereas dependence on family proximity in dealing with stressors or mental health concerns may be a greater risk factor for Latina/o students and those of migrant farmworker background than the general student population (Arana, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Other personal and environmental factors are outlined below, with brief mention of their potential relationship to the CAMP program, such as affordances made by the CAMP program to mitigate risk factors or promote protective factors in these categories. The following are typical supports offered, from high school senior year, proceeding to summer and into first year of college: assistance with application processing for admissions and financial aid, housing assistance, personalized tutoring, academic advising, student advocacy, mentorship program, health services, cultural activities, and transitional services (Center for Migrant Education, 2022).

A program such as CAMP can impact several areas of the persistence/retention models, chiefly one's academic self-concept and support systems, shown to influence persistence and retention in longitudinal studies (Ramirez, 2012; Wolaver & Finley, 2020). Also, finances are a crucial factor CAMP addresses as it ensures costs associated with attending college are covered, and provides assistance in procedures which impact finances indirectly, e.g., finding housing and transportation (Escamilla, 2019; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). However, CAMP cannot make up for the lost income to a family where students might be contributing to make ends meet, where the average farm worker annual wage is 12,500-17,000 (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2020). When creating programs, institutions must recognize the variety of culturally mitigated

factors and economic realities incorporated within the migrant farmworker community, especially generational status, family influence and responsibilities (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Wiseman, 2003).

Students' heritage and family are also sources of strength and support (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012). Here, one should also note that community cultural wealth can be a tremendous asset, and asset-based frameworks allow us to understand that family ties and culture are not a detriment holding back migrant students in higher education, but a consideration among potential protective factors (Acevedo & Solarzano, 2021; Araujo, 2011). In another case study from the New Mexico State CAMP program, results helped researchers to understand the importance of family cultural capital and knowledge in navigating new experiences, even if their family members had not themselves experienced higher education (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012).

In terms of environmental and program factors identified by Hernandez and Lopez (2019), programs like CAMP may also play a role in acclimatizing students to a new racial climate and allow them to build a sense of ethnic community. Involvement factors identified in the above study agree with other research conducted with students from migrant farmworker families, and these include mentorship, faculty-student interaction, and participation in student organizations (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Ramirez, 2012). Finally, sociocultural factors that influence Latino/a students' first year experience and retention include one's immigration status (or family immigration status), ethnic identity development, gender roles, and religion (Araujo, 2011; Hernandez & Lopez, 2019). While these sociocultural factors are not explicitly addressed in the CAMP program's charter, some factors are addressed through the nature of the support systems dedicated to this group and activities first year students engage in. These will be further examined in the individual narratives findings and discussions chapters

of this study, Chapter 4 and 5. For example, ethnic identity development might be fostered by peer mentorship and community service or service-learning experiences, as well as intentional connections with faculty who are Latina/o and have migrant backgrounds themselves (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

Visual and Photo-based Qualitative Research

Visual and photo-based methods have also been referred to as *participant-generated visual methodologies*, and may include photovoice, journaling and drawings as alternative means of expression (Guillermine & Drew, 2010). Past qualitative and mixed methods studies have shown that they allow those who normally feel disempowered to fully express their understanding and ideas more openly to challenge dominant discourse (Ortega-Alcazar & Dyck, 2011). Using this method participants take on greater control, which eases the power and knowledge differential that normally exists between researchers and youth or college student participants (Evans-Agnew et al., 2022; Liebenberg, 2018). The verbal and visual can interact through open-ended interviews as researchers aim to encourage, prompt, stimulate and respond in ways that facilitate sharing of life experiences; as the participant engages with larger social realities to share thoughts, aspirations and feelings (Henwood et al., 2020).

Photo elicitation is a multimodal technique for studying what people choose to record via a photograph and then share verbally about those pictures (Henward et al., 2020). With regards to the strengths of photo elicitation, this method has the potential to reveal how participants might express their own values and thus does not restrict individuals of migrant background to certain narratives (Raby et al., 2018). Photo elicitation has also been shown to assist in memory recall, increase focused sharing on important themes, promote self-reflection, and generate novel interview responses (Reese, 2014).

Photo-voice or *photonarrative* are terms often used when this method is applied to work with marginalized groups, in order to increase self-representation, facilitate social change and empowerment (Book & Mykkanen, 2014; Raby et al., 2018). While there is often an unequal relationship between the *researcher* and *researched* in traditional research with youth, this method necessitates more listening to and information driven by the participant (Book & Mykkanen, 2014; Leonard & McKnight, 2015). Photo elicitation has also been used to understand individuals from migrant communities, generating significant contributions to the field. For example, Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck (2011) used photo elicitation interviews with migrant families to study health and well-being, and found a great deal of relevant information towards serving this community that traditional survey methods did not.

Purpose Framework and Purpose Interventions in College

Human motivation and the exploration of purpose has undergone a renaissance in the field of psychology over the past two decades, with the role of purpose in positive psychology providing insight into our understanding of development throughout one's lifespan, including the experiences of youth and emerging adults, even transnationally (Damon et al., 2003; Mariano, 2014). Purpose has been defined in several ways, however most contemporary understandings in psychology draw from Damon's (2003) definition, as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond-the-self" (p. 121). This definition is applicable to emerging adults in terms of understanding motivation and meaning, but when considering students also depends upon the student's age and stage in life entering college, as well as culture and worldview.

College typically marks a life transition for emerging adults that allows the formation of deeper connections with self-described life purpose, also perhaps finding and pursuing ways to

achieve it (Pfund & Lewis, 2020; Sullivan, 2016). Thus, it has been proposed that understanding more about college students' purpose can help us also understand why a student may or may not be successful and persist in their academic or career goals (Nash & Murray, 2010; Pfund et al., 2020; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2020). In emerging adulthood, being able to identify a life purpose is associated with greater life satisfaction and ability to persist in goals (Bronk, 2009). In fact, when measured both quantitatively and qualitatively, it appears one's sense of purpose may impact persistence and retention among college students specifically (Hill et al., 2016, Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018; Malin, 2022; Welkener & Bowsher, 2012).

College students' choice of activities are impacted by their self-identified purpose (Molasso, 2006). According to Nash and Murray (2010), who wrote a handbook on assisting college students in finding purpose, meaning-making in collegiate life is dependent upon finding purpose, identifying values and exercising self-efficacy, which is in alignment with Dr. Viktor Frankl's classic assessment of what makes a purposeful life. However, Dr. Frankl would also add the key aspects of *response-ability* and inner freedom of choice (Frankl, 1955). This would involve a student recognizing their ability to respond to all life circumstances, including those that cause them to suffer or reflect past trauma, and calls upon their ability to choose their own attitude and actions in response to those life circumstances. Thus, awakening to one's purpose through a combination of self-introspection and action, in alignment with one's values, is the goal of Frankl's purpose interventions, which he termed *logotherapy* (Frankl, 1955; 1969).

Person-centered approaches to studying purpose are concerned with finding student profiles, fitting groups or categories of students, and in this case understanding how purpose shapes those categories to determine such outcomes as pursuit of life goals, academic studies and persistence in college. In a recent person-centered study of college students, purpose determined

the engagement and activities that students chose to pursue in college, more so than those activities fostered purpose (Malin, 2022). This study of 2,261 college students found there may be distinct educational experiences that support continued purpose development, and these may depend upon the different profiles (types of purpose orientation) with which the student enters into college (Malin, 2022). Perhaps just as important as this finding, scoring higher on related constructs of meaning, social agency, goal orientation, and prosocial motivation predicted being in the *High Purpose* category using latent class analysis (Malin, 2022, p. 13).

Several purpose scales have been validated to allow measurement of purpose across diverse and transnational populations, such as the Purpose in Life (PIL) and Claremont Purpose Scale (CPS) (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964). However, in one study examining these two scales used to measure purpose among college students, researchers found concepts that work well statistically and theoretically among adults might not generalize to young adults (Angel et al, 2021). Therefore, further research may be important in assessing common measures of purpose among this population, and specifically more qualitative or mixed methods approaches may be necessary to understand the unique purpose orientations of youth/young adults, and generate new themes/categories around purpose.

Beyond-the-Self Purpose

Beyond-the-self (BTS) purpose is particularly salient in purpose literature, which includes prosocial motivation and social agency, and specifically involves identifying purpose beyond-self-oriented goals or career orientation for college students. In a study focused on why students attend college and persistence of first year college students, it was found that those who sought to benefit society/others through their education fared much better than those who valued financial goals most in seeking higher education (Leppel, 2005). This may also be due to the fact

that there was a high percentage of students who selected majors that did not fit their interests and passions, which resulted in discouragement and higher dropout rates (Leppel, 2005). More specifically, students who considered positive contributions to their community or altruism as part of their purpose (however they defined this) in addition to their own interests fared better both academically and socially in college, as well as expressing greater commitment to their degree pathway (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018)

A student need not communicate only one purpose, just as identity is not composed of only one facet. One might instead conceptualize the spectrum of purpose from self-oriented goals to more beyond-the-self goals, with varied levels of each and potentially finding a balance between them. Furthermore, this balance can change over time leading up to college and throughout emerging adulthood. In one study of US-Americans, for example, this breakdown was about half and half, with slightly more students at college age holding beyond-the-self purpose (Moran, 2009). In international populations drawing upon very different cultural perspectives, the act of seeking life purpose itself was found to be valuable, in terms of life satisfaction in emerging adulthood (Bronk et al, 2009).

In a study of 850 emerging adults (mean age 19.96), purpose commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of well-being, significantly predicting greater life satisfaction and positive affect and lower negative affect (Sumner et al., 2014). In another recent study of 421 college students, “awakening to purpose and altruistic purpose” had indirect positive effects on first-year GPA, academic standing, and retention through degree commitment (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2020). The previous study used a validated Revised Sense of Purpose Scale (SOPS-2), measuring awakening to purpose, awareness of purpose, and altruistic purpose. Here, *an altruistic purpose* would be seeking to serve society or community, i.e., beyond-the-self.

Awareness of purpose could be defined by having a clear and identifiable life purpose, whereas *awakening* was more process-oriented and ongoing, for example, "I am gaining clarity about my life's purpose" (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2020, p. 4). Such process-oriented measuring sticks may be useful in a transition program like CAMP, which has weekly face to face contact points with students over the course of several semesters.

Spirituality

While not the focus of this review, I would be remiss if it did not address the powerful role of religion and spirituality in many students' development, as research suggests that it may play a significant role in cultivating purpose (Mariano & Damon, 2008; Nash & Bradley, 2008). This has been present from the conception of purpose as a construct in modern psychology, in what Frankl called a search for ultimate meaning, and can undergird a powerful purpose beyond the self (Frankl, 1969; 2011). Some scholars have also proposed a typology of spirituality that might allow us to understand purpose better among college students (Nash & Bradley, 2008). Such a typology might overlap or be combined with aforementioned purpose profiles, in future research. As such, the psychology of religion and spirituality has relevance for qualitative studies examining purpose and collegiate transition experience.

Spirituality can play a critical role in facilitating successful college transitions, as well as in promoting overall well-being and a sense of purpose in life (Astuti & Yulianti, 2020; Damon, 2008; Mariano et al, 2019; Parks-Leduc & Schaefer, 2013). Damon (2008) suggests that spirituality can provide individuals with a sense of connection to something greater than themselves, helping them to understand their place in the world and develop a sense of meaning and purpose. Similarly, Mariano and colleagues (2019) show that spirituality can be a key factor in the development of purpose, particularly for marginalized youth; they found that spirituality

provided a sense of hope and resilience for young people who faced adversity, helping them to develop a sense of purpose in life.

Astuti and Yulianti (2020) found that college students who were more engaged in spiritual activities, such as prayer or meditation, reported lower levels of stress and higher levels of life satisfaction than their less spiritual peers. These findings suggest that spirituality can serve as a valuable coping mechanism for college students, helping them to navigate the often-overwhelming transition to college life. Recent research also found that college students who reported higher levels of spiritual well-being, such as feeling connected to something greater than themselves, engage in prosocial volunteering, and were more likely to report a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their lives (Parks-Leduc & Schaefer, 2013). Overall, these studies suggest that spirituality can serve as a valuable resource by providing a sense of grounding, meaning, and purpose.

Mentoring

Research suggests that mentoring is a valuable approach to promoting a sense of purpose among college students, particularly for those who are first-generation students or from marginalized backgrounds. Mentoring relationships can provide students with guidance, networking opportunities, and exposure to diverse career paths, all of which can help them develop a sense of purpose and direction in their careers (Zakaria & Lashari, 2020). Lough and Boyd (2020) also conducted a systematic review of mentoring and purpose among college students and found that mentoring relationships have a positive impact on the development of purpose, identity, and resilience among first-generation college students. They found that mentoring relationships that are supportive, empowering, and challenging can provide a sense of

belonging, foster personal growth, and promote academic success among students from marginalized groups (Lough & Boyd, 2020).

Other research has also highlighted the benefits of mentoring for promoting purpose among college students. Samaan and Huang's (2020) meta-analysis found that mentoring was one of the most effective interventions for enhancing college students' sense of purpose. The study also found that mentoring programs that are designed to promote purpose are more effective when they are tailored to students' unique needs and interests, and when they include opportunities for reflection and feedback (Samaan & Huang, 2020). Another study by Zakaria and Lashari (2020) explored the role of mentoring in promoting career readiness and found that mentoring relationships can provide students with guidance, networking opportunities, and exposure to diverse career paths, all of which can help them develop a sense of purpose and direction in their careers. In summary, effective mentoring relationships can be supportive, empowering, and challenging, and provide opportunities for personal growth.

Purpose Interventions and Purpose-building Experiences

The other side of this equation is that students may need different educational experiences to support their continued purpose development rather than purpose purely impacting one's educational experience, which leads to the consideration of purpose interventions in the college setting. The opportunity to receive feedback and engage in dialogue around one's life purpose has been the focus of several studies in this area. One approach has been to offer an "Introductory Life Calling" course, focused on identifying purpose and the collegiate experience's role in achieving this purpose (Conner et al., 2012). This study of 3,338 first year students, the experimental group who took the course were more likely to persist in college, had greater ability to express how their values align within their life calling, and had

stronger connections with faculty (Conner et al., 2012). Another study of 102 college students showed that those who engaged in the guided discussion regarding their values, life goals, and purpose saw an increase in goal directedness, which played a role in improving life satisfaction (Bundick, 2011).

Service learning or experiential learning are typically part of the CAMP program and can be powerful factors in terms of both purpose development and persistence. College students who engaged in a semester-long service-learning commitment had improved confidence in fulfilling their purpose, and self-reported commitment to their purpose was affected positively by informative feedback, especially for students who had low intrinsic motivation (Shin et al., 2018). Also, experiences during college that encouraged students to think about purpose, studies and life goals in a more integrated way included: experiential learning, service learning, and living-learning communities (Welkener & Bowsher, 2012). With the above research in mind, it may also be useful to employ purpose interventions before college (such as high school to college transition programs) and thus influence life purpose trajectory and expand options for students, as some research has demonstrated that purpose orientation may act to limit students' choice of which college/program to attend, or whether to enter college at all (Scharma et al., 2017).

Research has shown that setting goals that align with students' values and interests is also an effective way to enhance their sense of purpose (Samaan & Huang, 2020). Encouraging students to set both short-term and long-term goals and breaking them down into actionable steps can help students stay focused and motivated. Providing both resources and support to help students achieve their goals is also important. In addition to goal setting, career exploration has proven another effective way to promote purpose among college students. Offering workshops

and resources to help students identify potential career paths that align with their interests and values, and providing opportunities for hands-on experience through internships, job shadowing, or other experiential learning opportunities can help students gain a better understanding of their career goals and how they fit into their larger sense of purpose (Samaan & Huang, 2020).

A recent study by Johson and colleagues (2021) specifically identified purpose-based interventions for first-generation college students from migrant farmworker families. The study involved 110 university students, and the surveys assessed the participants' levels of purpose and well-being (p. 3). The researchers used statistical analysis to compare the results between the intervention group and the control group. Findings suggested interventions include (a) encouraging students to connect with their personal values and strengths and help students set meaningful goals for their academic and personal lives; (b) providing opportunities for students to engage in activities that align with their values and goals; (c) fostering a sense of belonging and community by connecting students with supportive peers and mentors; (d) helping students develop a growth mindset and resilience in the face of challenges, by encouraging students to reflect on their experiences and use them as opportunities for learning and growth, and (e) providing access to resources and support services that address the unique challenges faced by this population (Johnson et al., 2021).

There is a significant gap in purpose literature addressing cultural expectations with regards to purpose in first generation Latino/a communities, as well as how language may play a role in expressing purpose among bilingual heritage Spanish speakers who must live and operate in an English-dominant collegiate environment. Researchers should also consider how BTS purpose fits into the resilience framework as a protective factor for diverse populations of students, given the rich supply of research on resilience among marginalized student populations.

With regards to students from migrant farmworker families specifically, there is a research gap that exists as to how one's family and migrant farmworker community values may promote this protective factor for entering CAMP students.

Conclusion and Future Research

In conclusion, in this review I paid particular attention to potential risk and protective factors for the Latina/o migrant background student population, and advantages which are potentially provided by purpose orientation or purpose interventions for college students and emerging adults. Again, using Damon et al.'s (2003) definition as a starting point, purpose development can influence goals and persistence, and is understood as something both personally meaningful and potentially impacting the world beyond oneself. Specifically in college students of migrant farmworker background, researchers might consider related constructs of identity, agency, goal setting, meaning making and motivation, as developed or utilized to foster purpose (Chickering, 1994; Damon et al., 2003; Hill et al., 2010; Leppel, 2005).

A strengths-based or assets-based approaches to educational research can prompt understanding as to why CAMP students are succeeding using a variety of data collection methods, incorporating both purpose and resilience (risk vs. protective factors) as frameworks. Such constructs could be assessed using qualitative or mixed methods research that generate rich qualitative data in order to understand the issues CAMP students may be facing on a personal and institutional level, as well as producing data to understand the benefits of specific programmatic factors. These could feasibly be addressed through seeking to better understand the role of purpose in migrant students and their pursuit of higher education, and perhaps lead to purpose-based interventions or experiences (such as service learning, internships or course

content). These again according to the literature review have demonstrated efficacy in other culturally diverse student populations.

Purpose development and interventions are inherently different from assessing purpose alone or considering how purpose orientation/profiles might affect persistence and academic outcomes, and there has been little research into how the development of purpose or purpose exploration can be built into the first-year college experience (i.e., living learning communities or collegiate transition programs such as CAMP). Sumner and colleagues (2018) provide an option moving forward after they explored the potential for purpose research among marginalized youth, one which emphasizes intragroup variability and sociocultural factors to promote purpose in marginalized populations. However, such an approach has yet to be used among bilingual learners or college students from migrant farmworker communities.

Future research might also recognize intersectionality of identity, to deal with the inherent limits of some existing definitions, interventions and measurement of *purpose* (Sumner et al, 2018). Thus, we can seek to develop and test interventions that might foster purpose in the most beneficial ways (e.g., BTS and altruistic purpose) for first generation students and other at-risk populations. More specifically, these might consider the intersectionality of language, ethnicity and culture among students from migrant farmworker families. In order to be of use to programs serving migrant students, future research on first year transition and persistence should also consider applying understanding of purpose profiles to CAMP programs.

With a better understanding of the factors which may impact transition to higher education for diverse populations, I asked how I could explore these factors more specifically for the migrant students identified in this CAMP program. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design and detail methods I employed to answer the primary research questions, specifically to

understand the transition of these six students to higher education through the CAMP program, and the role purpose plays in it. I also explain in more detail the selection of participants, methods and questions guiding the semi-structured interview, how the auto-driven photo elicitation technique contributed to this, and how data the resulting was analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design and Paradigms

I employ an exploratory case study design to answer my research questions. Exploratory research designs typically include literature searches, in-depth interviews, focus groups and can include case analyses, in order to explore a new line of inquiry and discovery on a given group, topic, or phenomenon, to investigate, describe and understand (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stebbins, 2011; Yin, 2018). In this case, I explored the transition of a group of students to higher education, and the role of a particular program and life purpose in this transition. My goal was to include a participatory approach in photo elicitation and focus group interviews to better showcase participants' experiences and understand the program. Through this exploratory case study, I explored how participants interacted with and were affected by the structure of the CAMP program within a top-tier research university in Florida. As the purpose of this study was to fully understand those factors which may influence transition to higher education, I sought participants' individual and collective experiences and perceptions through photo-elicited semi-structured interviews followed by interactive focus group discussions of emergent themes. I employed multiple methods outlined in more detail below. Overall, the exploratory case study design enabled a holistic understanding of the CAMP student experience and the most salient factors which impact students' successful transition to higher education.

Within my pragmatic and reflexive approach, the researcher (myself) is an active participant intertwined with the participants in the study and I play a role in both understanding and interpreting findings. However, this approach does not preclude useful interpretations for the

CAMP participants (Cresswell et al., 2003; Morgan, 2007). In qualitative research, a researcher can use both a pragmatic paradigm and incorporate elements of reflexivity in both data analysis and presenting/interpreting findings. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which data are collected and analyzed, and thus better applies results to the communities it may serve (Biesta & Burbles, 2003; Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). A constructivist approach also recognizes that knowledge is constructed through the social interactions between the researcher and participants. Constructivism also posits learners co-construct knowledge rather than just passively taking in information, in order to understand it (Elliot et al., 2000). In this way, the researcher's role is to actively engage in a dialogue with the participants / students and to critically reflect on their own assumptions and interpretations.

At the same time, pragmatism as a research paradigm emphasizes the importance of using multiple methods and perspectives to understand a research problem. This approach recognizes that there are multiple ways of interpreting data and that findings can be shaped by the research context, the questions being asked, and the intended audience (Morgan, 2007). This does not exclude the above understanding of researcher interpretations and interactions with participants. In fact, pragmatism offers an appropriate framework for integrating different research methods and paradigms and asserts the importance of methodological pluralism in social science research (Morgan, 2007; Creswell et al., 2003). In this manner, my role as a researcher can expand to focus on the practical implications of the research and to consider how their findings can be applied to the community of learners in question.

To incorporate both constructivist and pragmatic elements into this specific qualitative research, I found a modified reflexive thematic analysis was ideal, which involved identifying patterns and themes in the data and interpreting them in relation to the research questions and

broader context. This approach allowed me to engage with the data in a way that was both reflexive and practical, acknowledging the role of interpretation while also prioritizing the practical implications of the research. Together, the participants and I sought to negotiate meaning from our shared understanding of participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), while they also emphasized their desire for findings to be of use to future students. Overall, incorporating both constructivist and pragmatic elements into a qualitative study required a careful balance between engaging with the social and cultural context of the data while also prioritizing practical understanding and implications of the research. By using an approach such as reflexive thematic analysis and also drawing on influential pragmatic research in the field of education, I effectively navigated this balance and produced both rigorous and relevant findings.

My modified reflexive thematic analysis approach assumed that recollections, current experience and feelings associated with them are all relevant and true, as they define the reality that each individual sees and shares in this qualitative study (Patton, 2015; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Production of knowledge and the right to affirm knowledge as true is participant-driven, and also mediated by me in an effort to record and understand the participants' reality and relate that to practical findings for CAMP and other stakeholders. Within the context of a CAMP program, while participant experiences may overlap due to their shared background and shared experiences, each person and their transition experience is unique, but this also does not preclude findings from being relevant to future students. The end goal of the selected methodology below is to tell the unique story of each participant and at the same time to understand their shared experiences within the boundaries of my research questions.

Context

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) is responsible for helping first

generation, first time in college (FTIC) students from migrant farmworker families transition to higher education in a structured and supportive way. They have a specific measurable goal in terms of support and retention, and the vast majority of CAMP programs across the United States serve students of Latin American heritage (USDE, 2021). These programs all have the same goals set forth by the United States Department of Education, however they have varying degrees of effectiveness which impacts their ability to renew a 5-year grant which enables them to host a CAMP program. These goals include academic success and student retention at the institution (USDE, 2021). Each program is thus continually seeking effective ways to support and retain the students they recruit, in which the first year of transition to higher education is crucial.

At this top-tier research university specifically, CAMP has existed for over a decade and focuses on the following in services to students: assistance with application processing for admissions, financial aid, and housing; personalized tutoring and academic advising; student advocacy and health services; as well as a mentorship program and assistance in all manner of the transition experience to college (CAMP, 2022). Some of the above programs filter into more specific programming, such as FAFSA and other scholarship workshops, monthly seminars and academic meetings around college transition topics, and any other services which may help to overcome obstacles for the above students, be they social-emotional or academic (CAMP, 2022).

Participants and Selection

Participants included six students of migrant farmworker background completing their first year of undergraduate education as CAMP program participants. Per CAMP entrance guidelines, they were all FTIC first year students from migrant farmworker families, entering fall semester of 2022. CAMP program staff were consulted about the study proposal before

submission to Institutional Review Board, in September of 2022. As stated above, initial information and later a detailed proposal were provided to the CAMP program's staff for consideration and proposed timeline discussion (see Appendix G). After final IRB approval in December of 2022, the announcement and recruitment flyer were sent to all of the CAMP 2022-23 cohort, which covered study expectations, included time commitment and photography expectations, and the expected potential benefits and risks of participation (Appendix A). I also utilized information from the previous year's CAMP annual report and expertise of staff members within the program in order to do outreach and formulate this initial communication.

Purposeful selection of study participants from among the 2022-23 cohort of CAMP students included verbal one on one explanation of the study, confirming willingness and answering questions; only six students volunteered, and all met the study criterion as outlined in the approved IRB study proposal (Appendix B). Thus, no additional selection or exclusion was required. Student participants were informed about the study first in an in-person program gathering, using the IRB approved announcement. This included basic expectations and total expected time commitment of approximately 45 minutes for 1:1 participant interviews, and 90 minutes for the focus group, and additional time for students to take or select photos they desired to fit each prompt about their transition to college, within a designated two-week time period. The study's participant group of six were drawn from a pool of 31 students who fit the above criteria for the study, again based upon those students who agreed to take part after understanding the requirements of the study. Verbal consent was obtained using the Study Adult Consent Form (Appendix F), before the first participant interview. The potential benefits were sharing and processing the CAMP experience with others and group discovery of shared themes, i.e., the opportunity to process them through selected photos, and make a collage or other

presentation with the photos. There was also an opportunity for follow-up writing through personal journaling prompts. Lastly, participants were each provided an Amazon gift card of $25.

Data Collection

I employed an exploratory method in order to understand the perceived experiences of the aforementioned six students, which incorporated both an auto-driven photo elicitation method and semi-structured interviews. It was exploratory as the goal is to understand the students more fully, generate new themes and develop new lines of inquiry in research which has not been done before. Interviewing in qualitative research is ideally an open-ended conversation which solicits sharing the life experience and perspective of participants that the researcher is hoping to understand, for which there are multiple techniques and considerations which can assist in generating richer data (Seidman, 2013).

This study combined semi-structured reflexive interviews utilizing photo elicitation data as the target reflexive activity, and included open-ended prompts which could also be addressed in our interviews, in the focus group, and in written format through student e-journals or member checking. Reflexive interviewing is also part of this recursive process, which involves the participant being given multiple opportunities to tell their story, and multiple opportunities to make sure the researcher has understood (Pessoa et al., 2019). This data was then triangulated with information about the CAMP program from the literature review and firsthand sources (program description and materials), and overall knowledge generated from photo elicitation about the students' transition experience.

To begin, during the Spring Semester of 2022, I briefed the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) directing staff team (three individuals) as to the nature of the study and

proposed design, in written format followed by a conversation. I explained my desire to select a specific number of students for data collection the following academic year (those beginning fall 2022), and I answered questions from the directors of the program. Then, study research questions were proposed to my doctoral committee, and I requested input from a group of five first year CAMP students as part of their regular mentoring or tutoring sessions in the previous 2021-22 academic year. These were then amended based upon feedback from the CAMP students and my doctoral committee (see Appendix A). In general, the CAMP students thought that the questions adequately solicited their first-year experience, and they reported these questions gave them enough prompting to fully describe both their transition to the university and experience as part of the CAMP program. In a few cases, clarification was needed, or further areas of concern were highlighted by the students, which in turn suggested questions that could be added, or expanding on the original question. Such areas included making the distinction between mentors, tutors, staff at CAMP and professors, as well as highlighting community living spaces or living learning communities within residential buildings on or off campus.

In my study, I asked the six participants to create a collage or other presentation using their 10-20 selected photos and arrive with them organized as a PDF or other file format to display. While participants were also given the option to print and physically arrange photos, none chose to do so. Participants were asked to also factor in the time it would take them to identify10-20 relevant photos highlighting their transition to higher education, based upon specific prompts. These photos specifically relate to their experience of transition and to their sense of purpose in CAMP, and their new living-learning academic community at large. They will also be invited to draw or write out any feelings or experiential associations in response to the prompts below, or alternatively describe them in words when they have finished their work,

or a combination of the two. This one-on-one part of the participant-driven reflexive photo elicitation was flexible, depending upon how the student wishes to present their photos and much time the students need, and the students need not all finish at the same time. However, a window of approximately two weeks is expected for the student to take and select their photos.

Auto-Driven Photo Elicitation Technique

An auto-driven photo elicitation technique is a reflexive photography method in which individuals themselves select which photos to take in order to describe or highlight experiences on a given topic (Clark, 1999; Harper, 2002). At the beginning of their second semester, six student participants were asked to take or select photos from a variety of topics, corresponding to the three primary research questions in the study (see Appendix D).

Photo-elicitation in general is a multimodal technique which utilizes visual input in order to elicit extensive verbal responses, often with symbolic qualities (Henwood et al., 2020). Photo elicitation techniques have been used across a wide range of research designs in anthropology, historical ethnography and cultural studies (Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2011, Raby et al., 2018). Overall, they have been shown to democratize the research process, and in particular for studies conducted with young people and marginalized populations, to deepen our knowledge of their own experiences and view of the world (Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Shaw, 2013).

Participant-generated or auto/participant-driven photo elicitation invites participants to take and/or select their own photographs and then to discuss them in subsequent one-on-one interviews or in focus groups (Raby et al., 2018). In general, these methods are associated with a desire to promote participatory research, in which participants are empowered as it fosters critical consciousness, through the participant ‘driving’ what is considered data, allowing them to tell their own story in their own voice. In this way, participants were invited to guide or ‘drive’

the conversation through their own lived experiences, based upon the photos they selected, to answer specific questions, ideas, or prompts (Shaw, 2013). Such research using participatory methods facilitated power sharing instead of a researcher-participant imbalance, collective learning and growth (Evans-Agnew et al., 2022).

Concerns with this method normally present themselves when the photos are left to speak for themselves or participants do not feel comfortable discussing them, in the environment and manner offered by the researcher (Bolton et al., 2001). Therefore, it was important that in this study I provided multiple opportunities for the participants to express themselves in multiple formats, i.e., in written form, in conversation with a peer group, or with the researcher one-on-one. Recent studies producing rich qualitative data encouraged participants to create art from their photos to demonstrate larger trends and themes in their lives, including collages displaying the photos on a larger visual landscape (Hopkins & Wort, 2020; Shaw, 2013; Vassenden & Jonvik, 2022). I encouraged these possibilities for participants to share their chosen photos, including the option of creating a visual presentation or collage with the photos. In the end, half of the group chose to present their photos in some form of digital collage, which is exemplified by one photo in my findings (see *Figure 2* in Chapter 4).

Interviews

Development of Interview Protocol

I started the interview process by conducting a thorough literature review of existing research on positive youth development and the experiences of migrant students in higher education (see Chapter 2). This involved discussions with faculty in the field and exploring protocols of relevant studies published in peer-reviewed journals. Based on my review of the literature, I identified several key themes or topics that emerged across the studies, which might

be included in an interview with this specific population of students. These included factors that influence the transition to college, the impact of a sense of purpose on students' experiences, and the role of values and goals in shaping behavior and decision-making.

One groundwork review that provided insight into these topics is "The Development of Purpose during Adolescence" (Damon et al., 2003). This study explores the role of purpose in promoting positive outcomes in young people, including academic achievement, personal well-being, and social responsibility. The studies reviewed within this suggest that a sense of purpose can be cultivated through activities that provide opportunities for growth and self-discovery, such as volunteering, mentorship, and creative pursuits (Nurmi et al., 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1996).

In addition, I looked in-depth at a recent project conducted by a faculty mentor that expanded upon the Revised Youth Purpose Interview (Andrews et al., 2006), which contains an interview protocol, as well as other sources to further understand its development and application (Mariano et al., 2021). I then used this Revised Youth Purpose Interview protocol (Damon et al., 2003) as an outline to understand the potential flow of the semi-structured interview, and examined how to identify potential questions to assess purpose as well as how students might diverge from the protocol. I also sought guidance on how to test and get input from others with regards to my own questions, and how my own protocol might focus more on my target student population and their unique transition experiences.

I lastly looked at other protocols that explored experiences of migrant students in higher education. For example, a recent qualitative study by Smith et al. (2021) examined the challenges and opportunities faced by migrant students in the transition to college. The authors also used in-depth interviews to explore students' experiences and identified several themes,

including the importance of community and social support, the role of family and cultural values, and the impact of institutional policies and practices. Another relevant study is "College Persistence of First-Generation Latino Students: The Role of Resilience and *Familismo*," (Solórzano et al., 2018). This study examines the experiences of first-generation Latino students in higher education and identifies factors that contribute to their success, including resilience and *familismo*, or a sense of family loyalty and obligation. The authors suggest that these cultural values can provide a source of strength and support for students as they navigate the challenges of college.

By drawing on these sources, I was able to develop a set of interview questions that are grounded in existing research on positive youth development, purpose, and the experiences of migrant students in higher education. These questions were then refined with a small group of students before use in the main study, through informal discussions. Throughout the process, I was cautious that my research design and methods adhered to ethical guidelines and principles outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) to ensure the well-being and privacy of participants.

Interview Process

Each individual interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, using semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A). Half of these were conducted in person (three participants), and half were conducted online using the Microsoft Teams platform, based upon the students' preferences. In either case, an audio recording was made and then transcribed, using pseudonyms agreed upon with the individual participant. Within 10 days, the follow-up focus group session was held with all six participants present at a classroom within the College of Education and lasted 90 minutes. The photo elicitation technique helped to guide both the

individual semi-structured interviews and focus group, as each of the photo prompts were aligned with the research questions of the study. A reflexive process necessitates interviewing that is conducive to reflexivity (Pessoa et al., 2019), and thus included in-depth questions, clarification and confirmation questions, as well as multiple opportunities for the participant to share and reflect on the process. Time was allowed for elaboration based upon each student's experience and desire to share. Participants were given instructions approximately three weeks before their individual session, and then again during the session (See Appendix D).

I asked participants to explain a bit about each of the 10-20 photographs, and how this particular thing/place/person/idea impacted their transition to college. Participants were also encouraged to arrange them digitally on an app / device (such as computer or phone, as a PDF or slideshow), or print them and make a collage. In general, categories included (a) influences pre-college such as family, high school and home community, (b) highlights of transition to college and aspects of those that most impacted the student, and (c) images representing the student's purpose. In the instructions I provided, they were also invited to take multiple photos in any category and then select which ones to share later. Students not only had an opportunity to discuss these photos in individual interviews, but also in the focus group with peers who were participating in this study, if they chose to do so.

In the focus group session, all participants had the opportunity to reflect on their photos and share more with peers based upon common themes uncovered in the individual interviews, including further display of selected photos on a device, overhead on screen, or a printed copy. To accommodate students, the focus group was held in their regular classroom meeting space in the College of Education, using question prompts again as an open-ended, flexible guide (see Appendix A). The group aspect of this data gathering facilitated discussion and connections

between participants that did not arise by conducting the individual semi-structured interviews, and such a method creates synergistic benefits by sharing photos on a common theme (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014; Van Schalkwyk, 2010).

A reflexive interviewing method for the focus group was used, in which participants could a) also ask questions of one another or the group at any point, and b) choose the themes they most wanted to discuss or expand upon, from a list compiled by the researcher. Reflexive interviewing as a method allows participants to be much more active in the research process, including suggesting changes, disagreeing with the researcher's interpretation, adding information and clarifying points they made in previous interviews (Pessoa et al, 2019). The participants dictated their own story and there is a reliable way for them to share their perception of particular events in their lives, and check that these are being portrayed accurately. One method I used during the focus group was to confirm that themes shared in individual interviews resonated, and to ask others to expand upon or add to that theme. Directly after the focus group, transcription and thematic understanding or interpretations made by the researcher were shared with each participant individually, to check for both accuracy and additional missing data. Assertively validating the participant's perspective through reflexive interviewing methods has been shown to strengthen the relevance of the overall research methods as well (Pessoa et al., 2019).

At the end of the semi-structured interviews (individual and focus groups), I also invited each student to write about things they had omitted, or they did not feel comfortable sharing with the entire group, and reflect on the process as a whole, in the form of e-journals. While only two students chose to do so and input was limited, this additional option may be beneficial for participants' processing information. It is also possible that some participants wrote about the

experience on their own and chose not to share their journal with the researcher. I then transcribed individual and group semi-structured interviews and coded them using the modified reflexive thematic analysis described below (along with any written materials shared with the researcher). This continued as an ongoing process in the 6-week period, thereafter, also described in further detail in the following section.

After analyzing the individual interviews, photographic and focus group data several times in the looping process, the following is my thought process regarding presentation of findings as a unified narrative, under the pseudonym *Maria* (see Chapter 4, Part II). I began the process of analyzing the interviews and focus group for common themes, and I considered how best to present their stories in a way that honors their experiences and perspectives. I was still drawn to the idea of narrative analysis, which allows for a deep exploration of individual experiences while also illuminating broader themes and patterns (Riessman, 2008). Where a few participants' narratives are divergent and cannot be reconciled to Maria as one narrative, I simply move away from the 3rd person singular and indicate that a few participants' experiences are different or do not fit and describe them as such.

Reflecting on the richness of the interview data, I still considered the use of direct quotes appropriate to capture the students' own words and phrasings (Charmaz, 2014), but did not identify those students individually. I wanted to ensure that their voices are central to the presentation of findings, but not identifiable to individuals. In addition to this narrative lens and direct quotes, I also wanted to integrate the few photos which students did submit that were appropriate for publication. This approach can provide a powerful way for students to convey their experiences and emotions beyond what can be captured in words alone (Rose, 2016).

Data Analysis and Validity

After recording and transcribing semi-structured interviews, and adding written data submitted by each of the participants in the form of member checking and e-journals, I coded all data using an open coding method: reflexive thematic analysis. My reflexive thematic analysis process was modified from that proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013; 2020), and is detailed in a specific subsection below, with some background provided here. In using a reflexive approach, no themes are fit into predetermined codes, rather they are found through seeking commonality in the data or a central organizing concept (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2020) describe steps of reflexive thematic analysis as a looping process which must be repeated multiple times in great depth in order to allow the researcher to identify both a) the voice of the participants, and b) identify the researchers' thinking. These involve familiarization with the data, coding the data, generating the initial themes, reviewing and developing the themes, then refining/defining/naming the themes and finally producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In my study, some participants' photos are presented alongside participant narratives as visual data in the findings and results chapter (see Chapter 4). However, many photos that included other people precluded the participants' photos from being displayed in narrative reports. Participants knew this and chose to utilize them to explain their own stories and responses to the research questions. These photos were nonetheless extremely effective in their primary purpose of eliciting richer qualitative data and allowing participants to participate in the research process.

Qualitative research can be a practice in aesthetics, more so when visual methods are employed both as data and process, as in this study. In other words, form and conceptual schema

that are utilized to explain and interpret the experiences of participants provide novel insight because they are drawing from multiple sensory input and allowing for multiple sensory output as data (Denzin, 2000). This has the potential to enliven communication and offer both researcher and participants more insight, connection and understanding between one another, and thus results in richer data through the process of co-creation, which must be analyzed within this relational context (Balmer, 2021; Boydell, 2011). Reflexive interviewing as a research strategy allows for elaboration and higher levels of understanding with the interviewer, for richer reflexive analysis and results, sharing meaning and reality as the participants see it (Harper, 2002; Pessoa, 2019). It also builds rapport and trustworthiness for both parties, as the interviewer is continually expressing their understanding and asking for checking and verification, through numerous interview sessions and means (Seidman, 2013). In other words, data analysis and validity is also based upon open communication and follow-up with the participants, which in this study includes written journals, email communication and member checking.

Modified Process

The goal was to synthesize and reduce themes to the essential without losing meaning, in accordance with the students' experiential criteria of this study, including notably purpose orientation, transition experience and meaning-making. Within this method, codes were labels that helped me the researcher to organize data into larger themes. These common themes are shared, recurring patterns across the dataset, occurring around our central organizing concept in the study (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Applying a pragmatic epistemological approach, production of knowledge is dynamic and iterative, with an emphasis on learning through action and reflection that comes from a continuous process of inquiry towards solutions that can have a positive impact on individuals or institutions (Morgan, 2007). Language and experience can also

be bidirectional with a pragmatic lens, as knowledge is produced by experimentation, and theories are tested against experience and refined based on the results (Cresswell, 2013). Also, in using reflexive thematic analysis language is implicit in the social production and researcher interpretation of both meaning and experience (Byrne, 2022).

The data analysis model I developed below (Figure 1) is based on my experience and knowledge of qualitative research methods, combining constructivist and pragmatic approaches to understanding data and coming to thematic interpretations. It draws on the broader principles of reflexive thematic analysis. However, the specific steps and procedures are my own adaptation of these principles.

1. Familiarization with the data: This involves reading and re-reading the data (e.g., interviews, focus group transcripts, field notes) to get a sense of the whole picture and the variety of experiences represented. This also included familiarization with all the photos submitted and matching them to specific places in the interview or focus group.
2. Initial coding: Here, I generated initial codes by systematically and critically reading through the data to identify concepts, ideas, and themes related to the research questions.
3. Journaling: Memos or notes that I wrote to myself throughout the analysis process. They can be used to explore and develop initial codes, record observations and ideas, and reflect on personal biases and assumptions.
4. Comparison and categorization: I compared and categorized the codes into broader themes or categories based on their similarity and differences. This process involves continually refining and re-categorizing codes and themes as the analysis progresses. One example was the larger category of challenges/vulnerable factors in first semester for participants, and the sub-category of a protective factor: women role models in college.

5. Focus Group Process using common themes identified by initial interviews. The focus group was not limited to previously discovered prevalent themes, but these did serve as a guide for our discussion, and what we might discuss in more depth.
6. Pragmatic review and refinement: Repeat steps 3-5 with new data. Then, I reviewed the categories and shared themes identified with participants (member checking) and refined them based on the new data. Then, related these where possible organizationally to the research questions, to begin considering how I could present findings. Where they did not specifically fit, they were later included as additional themes associated with the general understanding of the student and their transition process (RQ1).
7. Theoretical sampling and alignment drafting: I asked where the developing findings fit with current understanding and research framework, then I sought additional theory to explore emerging categories and themes in more depth. An example here was identity formation and intersectionality, featured in the work of Kimberle Crenshaw (1989; 2017), and in the case of Latinos in college recent work by Anne-Marie Núñez (2014).
8. Looping: repeating steps 3-7 as needed, until I was confident that the themes were refined, shared themes apparent, and applicable theories necessary to understand and interpret findings were known, from my understanding.
9. Data organization to present findings: This involved presenting the data in an organized or visual way so that each participant could be understood within a broader context, to help identify patterns and relationships between the categories and themes. In this case, I chose to use the research questions and several thematic categories as organization tools, i.e., *values* associated with *purpose*.

10. Interpretation: In this final step, I synthesized the data and developed a practical interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants that might be used by stakeholders at educational institutions, highlighting the diversity of experiences and the implications for policy and practice. Also, I succinctly provided implications and recommendations in summary format.

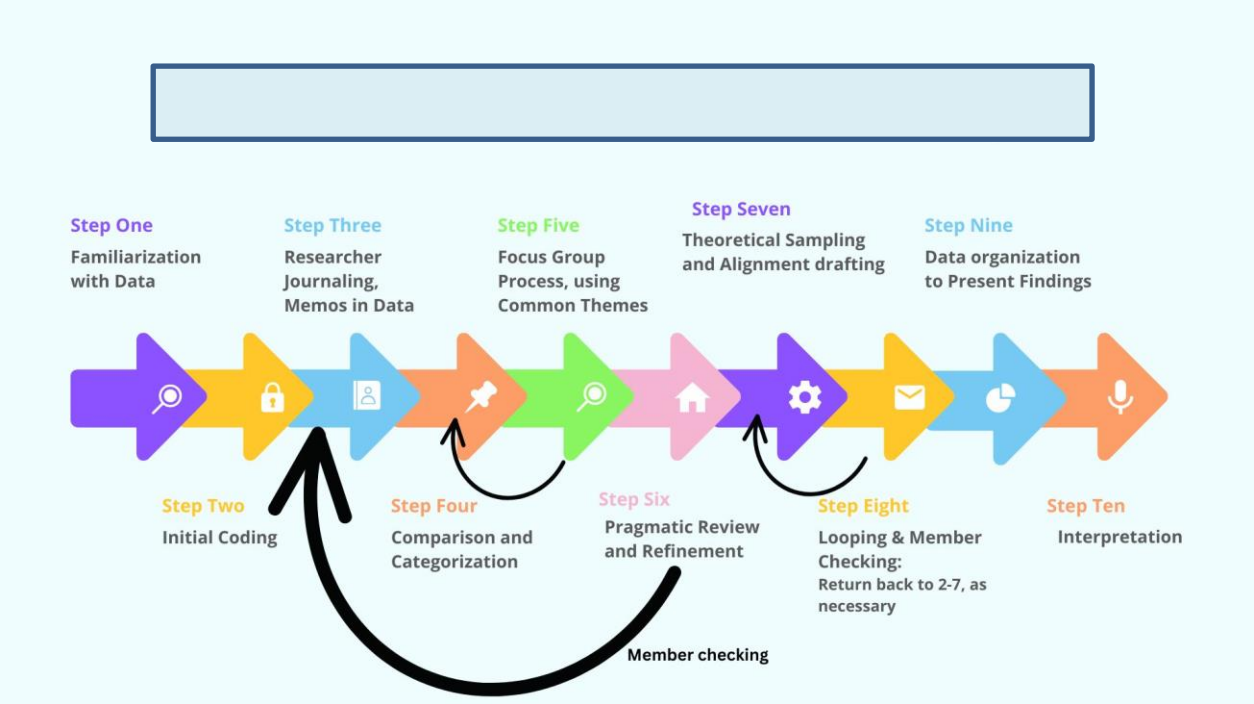

Figure 1. Modified Reflexive Thematic Analysis Model

It is worth noting that this model was iterative, meaning that the researcher may cycle back and forth between the steps as new insights emerge throughout the analysis process. Additionally, the model is flexible in that it can be adapted to fit the specific research question and data set. I am not separate from this process but a part of it, and while I'm not labeled one of the participants my input and choices are at play in this model. Thus, I attempted to focus on the voices of participants, while also understanding and sharing my own role in the interpretation.

In my modified reflexive thematic analysis process, I began by listening to and transcribing the recorded interviews in the presence of the students' selected photos, to have our interaction fully contextualized. After this initial familiarization with the data, I began the process of coding. I used an inductive approach, which meant that I allowed themes to emerge naturally from the data rather than starting with a preconceived coding framework. I read through the transcripts multiple times, making notes and initial observations about the data. As I identified potential themes, I kept detailed notes on my thought process and decision-making to ensure that my analysis was transparent and reflexive.

I did initial coding using an open coding technique, then considered meaning and relationships in context by generating initial themes. Participants were given the opportunity to also share in Spanish language, however while some students considered Spanish their first language and they might express a single concept in Spanish, English was their preferred method of communication for both interviews. Thus, no translation from Spanish to English was necessary as participants believed they fully expressed all their ideas in English. In a few cases, cultural concepts were noted that the researcher felt needed additional explanation for a wider audience, and Spanish words were italicized in narratives and findings sections in these cases. I then began to memo in specific places in the analysis process and applied my journaling to prepare for comparison and categorization.

This initial two rounds of data analysis drew out both themes unique to the participants and then common themes, in order to better inform the upcoming focus group session and facilitate conversation around these themes. Emergent shared themes were compared from focus group, providing a compass for our discussion around five major categories of themes, these are detailed in findings (see Chapter 4). In order to do so, open coding was used in generating the

initial themes, then reviewing and developing the themes. The group session also uncovered further themes that were not originally found in individual conversations, and additional aspects of the previous themes. Note that emergent themes were shared with participants prior to and after the focus group to check for correct understanding.

At least half the focus group time was non-theme driven, but rather was left open to discuss the research questions in a less structured manner and photos participants still wanted to discuss. Participants were asked to introduce themselves often to make sure the audio recording captured divergent and convergent statements, to relate back to their individual interviews. This session was then also transcribed, and both sessions' identified themes were shared with each participant (individual session shared only with that individual and focus group shared with everyone). The focus group was then coded, making categories of meaning and labels to begin the fourth step in reflexive thematic analysis: reviewing and developing themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013; 2020). Some intentional coding around the frameworks of purpose and collegiate transition were also utilized in the fifth step of refining and naming themes, based upon previous research with college students in this area. These included beyond-the-self or self-transcendent purpose, for example.

Next, I reviewed and refined the themes, making sure that they were coherent, consistent, and relevant to the research question. I also worked to ensure that the themes were grounded in the data and supported by multiple examples from the transcripts. Throughout this process, I continued to reflect on my own biases and assumptions using journaling, as well as how my positionality as a researcher influenced my interpretation of the data. Some journal entries I found related well to the above process, and my thinking throughout the data analysis below.

Entry 16: Today, I had a conversation with a student who is struggling to navigate their identity and cultural roots. It reminded me of my own experiences growing up and the challenges I faced in understanding and reconciling my own cultural background. This experience reinforced the importance of providing space for students to explore and express their identities.

Entry 45: In reflecting on my own biases and preconceptions, I've considered how my own experiences as a TCK might impact my work with migrant students. I see many of the same advantages of bilingualism and code switching, but few of the protective factors that expatriates often receive, financially and in terms of societal status. I recognize the need to remain open to the unique experiences and perspectives of each individual student and to avoid making assumptions based on my own experiences.

In addition, a few entries specifically regarding photo elicitation are below:

Entry 77: As I've been working with photo elicitation methods, I've become more attuned to the ways in which images can convey emotions and experiences that are difficult to put into words. I'm excited about the possibilities of using visual methods to deepen our understanding of migrant students' experiences, but unsure of how to integrate them into narratives, particularly as so many include identifiable photos.

Entry 102: One of the challenges of using photo elicitation methods is navigating the ethical issues around using other people's images and relating them to specific text or quotations in the interview. I was careful to obtain informed consent and to ensure that participants understand how their photographs will be used in the research.

Both theoretical sampling and drafting alignment with previous research areas revealed areas of latent or missing knowledge that needed further exploration to explain the data,

including identity and intersectionality theory. After which, I began the looping process of revisiting the data and themes using the lens of new theory and my own perspective as a researcher. Both member checking and maintaining a researcher notebook were an important part of this process. In each round of looping and refining themes from the students' experiences, I also attempted to integrate their own writing with direct quotations, in whatever format they chose to submit this after the group session. Their choice not to submit additional information in the member checking phase was also a source of data, indicating their level of agreement or willingness to share more.

In this reflexive process, I also questioned where my own background and epistemology impacted actions we took, choice of methods and questions posed; therefore, I maintained a researcher notebook and applied introspective questions at each step in the analysis via my own journaling (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I communicated key reflexive points in this process to participants in follow-up emails. I also included direct quotations highlighted in the text as examples informing my data analysis in each narrative section, to check that I was accurately representing the ideas of the participants. As part of member checking, I asked if they would like to add or change anything in how I had reported and represented those statements thematically, and encouraged them to do so with examples. In the final data analysis phase prior to producing a report, these multiple looping phases generated additional themes which contained both unique participant contributions and shared themes.

A final member checking round yielded no additional input from participants aside from confirming the results and input with regards to pseudonyms. Note that only 4 of the 6 participants shared photos they wanted to be published. I shared my analysis of themes and statements that accompanied their selected photos for each research question. I took this last step

to indicate that I had exhausted the looping process and came to the highest level of shared or negotiated meaning with the participants, within the constraints and format of this study (Byrne, 2022). Finally, I developed a narrative account of the themes, which involved organizing the themes into a coherent and meaningful story that accurately reflected the experiences of the participants. I also worked to contextualize the findings within the broader literature on first-generation college students and the challenges they face in the college transition process. I later combined the narratives into one shared narrative in order to better represent the group and at the same time maintain anonymity, in coordination with my dissertation committee.

In terms of presenting data in the results section, I adapted my method with regards to presenting photos from the participants due to their selection choices. The vast majority of photos taken included friends and family, which were very useful in building meaning and context with the researcher. Participants were aware these could not be published in the narrative or results section, but the utility and power of the photos superseded other considerations for the participants. The photos were used as a means of inspiring, drawing out commonalities with other participants, and recalling key information to be shared with the researcher, rather than speaking for themselves. These together aim to tell the story of the participant in their own words, as they relate to their experience of transition to higher education, and aforementioned life purpose.

I also discussed possible peer interaction and choice to participate in depth. It was understood among participants that the nature of a focus group may include some peer effect upon the participants' willingness to share photos, rather than attempting to minimize this effect during the focus group process. Both the individual sessions and follow-up member checking or e-journaling assisted in drawing out divergent themes and helping to mitigate this effect. While

participants only chose to share one or two photos each during the focus group, the collaborative benefits of the group far outweighed this limitation, as photos served as a means of drawing focus towards their shared group experiences.

Validity

The idea of validity is unique within this type of qualitative study, as the goal is to explore and discover, not necessarily to confirm or generalize results; however, questions of validity and reliability still depend upon the rigor of the research process itself (Leung, 2015). In other words, the choice of methodology and underlying assumptions must align with my research design and the implementation of the study, for which an alignment chart was utilized in planning. In both of the above, I also aimed to include all voices, especially those that were divergent and presented different perspectives, then engaged in a reflexive way with the data in order to interpret and make sense of results alongside the participants (Pessoa et al, 2019). Ultimately, this process of analysis sought to develop deeper self-reflection and question my own assumptions or biases inherent in the research process, as well as institutional bias or preconceptions in the field of higher education at large, which I am a part of.

Triangulation

Triangulation of results in qualitative research is achieved by looking at the data emerging from different sources and perspectives (Patton, 1999); in this case, the findings from interviews and focus group, photo-elicitation data, as well as literature available on the topic, other programmatic information as it pertains to CAMP, previous research with students from migrant farmworker families and purpose among college students. This type of analysis is a recursive process, as both data collection and analysis are not linear, and the segments of the reflexive analysis includes me, the researcher, at the center of analysis (Patton, 2015).

Triangulation of data occurs through a continual effort to accurately reflect the real situation and real experiences of these students in the program (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Themes that emerged from the data were checked on multiple levels via each of the following methods: data triangulation, methodological and environmental triangulation. In terms of environmental triangulation, the time of semester and other factors involved in where and how we met attempted to place the students in a neutral and safe space, in which everyone could feel comfortable sharing. Theory triangulation incorporates the aforementioned relevant theories, and identified new theories as they were needed to understand qualitative phenomenon, detailed in results section of this study.

Ethics

The following points represent the ethical considerations I employed in this dissertation process, and of primary importance in conducting research with young people is the protection of each participant. In the case of qualitative interviews and visual methods such as photo elicitation, I had to consider and expect that difficult feelings and experiences will be more accessible through these methods (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). In order to preemptively deal with any discomfort or uncertainty for students, I kept open communication with support staff in the program. This being said, past photo elicitation studies participants have shared a net positive or beneficial effect, or even therapeutic effect as a result of sharing about their experiences (Harper, 2002).

With regards to data, privacy and anonymity were an important part of the protocol for data collection and storage. I followed a data management plan to make sure data were not shared with anyone outside of the researcher and necessary CAMP staff, who could identify the

participants. This included storing all data in a password-protected account that used pseudonyms associated with the photos and transcription of interviews.

Lastly, I considered my role in the research process with regards to ethics. Within educational research, I recognize I am not a neutral observer and that I have effects upon the participant and am in fact co-constructing knowledge with them. In generating questions and prompts for the photo elicitation technique, I recognized that I must reflect on my own positionality and goals in the study, and weigh these against the benefits and needs of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Orb et al., 2001). As such, a continual line of communication by email and follow-up survey were necessary to make sure that a) the participant is healthy and positive about the experience, and b) they had not changed their mind about sharing any of the information (verbal data or photos), which I must be responsive to and accept. Reflexivity is necessary both as part of the data collection and analysis, and as part of the design and implementation of the study (Pessoa et al., 2019).

With regards to student produced visual m particular attention was paid to ownership and full disclosure about how and where photos taken by participants was used (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). There are inherent concerns of photograph ownership, permission for their use across various means of research presentation / publication, and concern regarding the ethics of photographing individuals who may not want to be included, or know how their likeness is being used in the research. To address these concerns, and in communication with the Institutional Review Board, participants were asked to not include photographs with identifiable faces, and I did not display them in presentation or publication if they did. To these ends, I also continually reminded students of their ownership and ability to discern what they would like to share and with whom.

To address ethical considerations of the study in an effective manner, I informed and discussed each of the following points with participants verbally and in a written document (Consent Form, Appendix F) prior to beginning any research:

- All students were made aware of voluntary participation, and their ability to withdraw at any time without any penalty and still receive a gift card.
- Reasonable allowances and accommodations could be made to enable students to participate in coordination with the CAMP program staff.
- Trusted mentors were employed to make sure students understood all directions and possible risks/benefits of the study from the start.
- There was no pressure or coercion employed to encourage participants to take part, and participants may withdraw at any time, for any reason or no reason.
- Informed consent was an important part of research process from the beginning: in written form and explained verbally in 1:1 interviews and in focus group as well.
- Focus group protocol were established on a "challenge by choice" basis, in which each participant knew they were also free to participate/contribute as much or as little as they would like and feel comfortable doing so.
- A safe space was available, and the opportunity to discuss with the researcher or other CAMP program staff, and an option offered for referral to the counseling center on campus.
- During any portion of the study (including 1:1 interview and focus group), participants could choose to not participate or share, and not to share their photos or share only select ones.

Assumptions and Considerations

One key assumption in my qualitative research is that the researchers' beliefs and assumptions inevitably shape the research process and outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge and reflect on these assumptions, as they have a significant impact on the research findings. In this study, the following assumptions have been disclosed: (1) the research aim was to discover patterns and theories that shed light on college transition of students from migrant farmworker families; (2) various perspectives, including those of individual participants, and the researcher influenced the results; (3) the research participants were truthful and honest in their communications; and (4) the authentic and relevant information provided by the participants was analyzed to inform diverse stakeholders interested in understanding collegiate transition through a CAMP program.

There are several things to consider inherent to conducting a qualitative research study. The results may be transferrable to other programs and students based upon the richness of descriptions, accounts of participants and reflexive nature of the work. All participants are unique, and this study was limited to female students and thus contains a unique perspective on their experiences as Latinas in a CAMP program. In addition, their willingness to divulge relevant experiences may be hindered by the researcher identifying as male. Participants' concerns about confidentiality and anonymity might also influence their participation, even if all personal information remains anonymous. Lastly, different readers or researchers might interpret the results differently based on their background, culture, or experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVES AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of a group of students from migrant farmworker families during their first year of studies in higher education as part of the College Assistance Migrant Program. More specifically, I sought to understand their transition experience to an institution of higher education and identify both personal and institutional factors which impacted their successful transition to college, or conversely did not address challenges they were facing. The narratives shared by this group of six students indicated many areas of commonality and a few areas of stark difference among them, as well as presented rich data that may be helpful for future lines of research, or applicable to institutional stakeholders working with this student population. A purpose framework provides a means of understanding life goals and persistence amidst challenges, yet is just one of many theoretical frameworks that may apply to understand these participants' interviews, photographic data, and themes that emerged from them. Again, the research questions can be summarized as follows:

A) How do students from migrant farmworker families perceive their transition to college and what most impacts this transition?

B) How does a sense of purpose impact the students' experience in higher education, and how might college influence their purpose?

C) In what ways does the CAMP program itself facilitate successful transition to college, and development or deepening of purpose?

I conducted the data collection and analysis for this study from December 2022 until March 2023. Participants were given a choice to conduct individual interviews and the focus group either in-person or via Microsoft Teams, according to personal preference. Half of the students (3) chose to conduct individual interviews online, and the other half in person at my learning consultant office near the College of Education, allowing for a total of six individual interviews. In both cases, participants did not seem hindered by the setting and the audio only recording was clear. Scheduling the focus group proved difficult, so all participants decided it would be most convenient to meet during a regularly scheduled CAMP weekly session, to make sure everyone could attend. With coordination from the CAMP program staff, we were able to use a classroom normally reserved for this purpose in the College of Education, during an "off week" (a day without the entire CAMP cohort).

I present the research analysis in this chapter in three parts, with care given to participant anonymity. The first is a brief narrative summary of the semi-structured qualitative interviews, and emergent themes uncovered from this part of the research process for each participant. Emergent themes are summarized below each individual narrative report, including any unexpected findings or patterns that emerged from my own analysis during the data analysis process.

The second part is a broader narrative report combining all six participants and is organized according to the 3 primary research questions in the study and several thematic areas. Each contains subsections related to each students' background, goals, values, transition experience and sense of purpose. This section also includes individuals' photos for elicitation from participants who desired to share their photos with a wider audience.

The third part of the analysis focuses on shared common themes and insight gleaned from discussing everyone's photographs in the focus group, during which all participants were present and shared a more limited scope of their photos in relation to shared themes. Lastly, Chapter 5 integrates the theoretical framework of the study and previous research in a more intentional way, and presents the summative findings, implications and recommendations.

To protect the identity of each participant, pseudonyms were used and anything which might identify them was removed from the narratives. However, some of these data were later included in the focus group as part of communal experience of these participants in the CAMP program. Member checking was employed at each stage in the process, i.e., after individual interviews, the focus group, as well as during data analysis to check emerging themes. Participants had an opportunity to add information, make changes and validate.

Part I: Participants Brief Introduction

The six individuals who volunteered to take part in the study were among a CAMP cohort of first year students numbering about five times these participants. They identified as female Latina first-generation in college students from migrant farmworker families, i.e., whose parents had migrated from Latin America and were employed as migrant labor in the agricultural sector. They were all 18-19 years of age at the time of this study.

Naomi

Background

Naomi's mother came to the US at an early age, and she was primarily raised by her mother, who has worked in the agricultural sector all her life. Her mother mostly harvested blueberries and tomatoes in Florida. Naomi was born in the US and grew up in an area where migrant farmworkers were a large part of the population, and Spanish was spoken in most of her

family and social circles. Values passed on from her family include "overcoming with resilience, sticking with it, struggling if necessary and getting through it" (Naomi). She also values independence, which she learned from supporting her family and mother. Her inspiration comes from her mom, seeing how hard she works and how much love she has for the entire family.

College has always been at the forefront of Naomi's mind, even in her early years in high school. Her reason for this focus on college was not just herself, but going to college for her community and family, as she pursues success for them. Things she really cares about include first and foremost her family, who have helped and still help her a lot, even while not physically present at college, they help by text and other forms of communication. She also believes that her mental health is important, and something she cares about more now that she is in college. Without it, she "cannot accomplish anything else or be there for others in life" (Naomi).

She got through high school and applied to college by having a never-give-up attitude, which she attributes to her upbringing. She recalls, "When I start something I finish it, even if it's hard. At least I finish, even if it's not perfect. I learned that hesitating can make you freeze and not finish something because you doubt yourself" (Naomi).

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) desire to cultivate values of persistence and resilience; (b) building new campus community through an LLC; (c) maintaining and supporting Mexican-American culture through an on campus student organization; (d) using a planner and time management to aid in adjustment to college; (e) home ownership and financial stability as primary goals; (f) family as integral to purpose in coming to college; (g) home community leadership and leadership in schools as part of life purpose; (h) CAMP as a means to attend

university, and as a holistic support program; and (i) mentorship in work-study position as important in seeing female role models in a professional space.

Sujely

Background

Sujely was born in the US, her parents both came from Mexico, and they met in the United States. Both of her parents are engaged in the agricultural sector, farmworkers mostly picking tomatoes and harvesting watermelon. She is from a relatively rural area in Florida and knew that she wanted to attend college from a young age. She spent time researching various routes to pursue higher education and knew it would be important for her family that she supported herself in college. According to Sujely, "relationships are number one in all choices" (Sujely), close family and friends are her main support system, and she is interdependent with them. They are also particularly important in what she defines and sees as succeeding in life.

Initially a major research university in Florida was not Sujely's first choice, due to a strong desire to pursue science, but later decided it was just too far and the thought of being so far from family would be too difficult for her to bear. The idea of starting completely fresh with no program and no friends would be too hard, she assumed, especially without support. This led to her finding CAMP. She did so in October of her senior year, and decided a program in Florida would not be too far away. After contacting CAMP recruitment staff and realizing she was qualified, she still harbored worries of not knowing people. She hesitated to both apply and accept the offer, and considered not going to college at all, or attending local community college. Meeting CAMP staff and others she could identify with in the program ultimately swayed her to accept.

Sujely describes herself as being an introvert who doesn't make friends fast, so it appealed to her having a connection already built into her first year of studies, and other peers with migrant farmworker background that would make it easier. She was also swayed by a local research center at the campus in her decision to come. Due to the influence of her family and younger siblings, she has an added interest in education, and is now taking an introductory teaching course and doing field experience to shadow teachers.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) high school work experience defining future purpose; (b) sense of accomplishment from personal earnings and contribution to family; (c) tutoring youth and fellow students is ideal opportunity to do service work in college, however helping others can be a detriment of one's own goals; (d) mentorship of others through CAMP program in second year; (e) parents as primary source of inspiration in life, and career in education as a means to accomplish purpose in home communities; (f) faith and service in a church as integral to successful transition to college; (g) CAMP as a holistic support program, having CAMP friends who understand cultural heritage and celebrate milestones together, (h) purpose defined in terms of serving God and family, rather than oneself; and (i) responsibilities associated with serving as a household's native English speaker.

Elvira

Background

Elvira grew up in a diverse agricultural community in Florida, where Spanish was spoken as much as English, and Spanish was her primary language at home. Her parents immigrated to the US from Mexico and were employed in migrant farm work her entire childhood and still do so, primarily work associated with harvesting and transporting tomatoes. Her father occasionally

went to Georgia for other agricultural work, leaving the family for months at a time during seasons of the year, to make more money during slow times. Elvira was born in the US and attended K-12 schools in Florida before attending college through the CAMP program. She has three siblings. Time in high school included participating in various student clubs and activities. This involvement played a major role in her high school career, helped her to meet new people, gain different skills, and a leadership position. She still maintains friendship with many of her friends from this commitment and is connected to a community that inspires her. This represented a well-functioning community, or a microcosm of something she would like to see in a well working community at large. She became involved volunteering with community nonprofits in her home community during high school. Partially because of this experience and inequities she saw growing up, she became involved in local political and advocacy work, and is currently in her second semester of college.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) inequities in home community and interest in social justice for farmworkers, (b) experience of loss and grief, and filling the role of a lost parent for siblings; (c) high school involvement as key to setting goals, and defining future purpose in terms of serving home community and larger migrant farm worker community; (d) work-study as a means to understand college operations and find mentors; (e) sense of responsibility for siblings and extended family; (f) addressing physical locations on college campus as part of a successful transition; (g) residential experience with CAMP peers, including celebration of milestones with cohort and weekly seminars; and (h) the significantly different process of overcoming challenges without family.

Mercedes

Background

Mercedes is from a rural community in Florida, located near larger coastal cities. She was born and raised here while her parents came to the U.S. in the early 2000s to work in the agricultural sector as migrant farmworkers. She chose to major in Education and is currently living on campus as part of the current CAMP cohort in her second semester of freshman year. She recalls that not every day has been easy for her and her parents, as her mother has tried to raise the family and not work, depending on her father's income which has put financial stress on the family.

She is the oldest of her siblings and describes herself as an ambitious person who has had to shoulder lots of responsibility from a young age. She has tried to be a good example for her younger siblings, which she notes has been very difficult at times. She found the transition from high school to college to be difficult in many ways, due to being used to the role of leading and supporting others. She wants to become a teacher due to her affinity and talent working with young children, which was developed as an older sister.

Family is her first priority, and she thinks about them often. She does, however, believe that putting herself first in terms of mental health is important and has learned this over the past year in college. While she is not perfect with this, she believes that she is getting better at prioritizing her own health and studies, due to sharing with and learning from peers in college. Her parents are dedicated to family and loyal; they have spent twenty years together.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) isolation as an ineffective coping mechanism, and the importance of mental health and scheduling personal enrichment time; (b) struggle to meet basic

needs of family coupled with feeling of responsibility to help parents; (c) oldest sibling experience promoting interest in educator career path; (d) serving as a role model for siblings; (e) creative writing and journaling as a means of processing difficult experiences; (f) CAMP seminars and campus job's roles in successful transition; (g) nuclear family as primary source of support and dealing with homesickness during first year of college; and (h) sources of inspiration from both popular culture and heritage culture.

Carmen

Background

Carmen's family is from Mexico and her parents immigrated to improve the opportunities for the next generation, including herself and her younger siblings. Acknowledging this, she places a great deal of importance on her college experience as a path forger, as she is the first of hopefully many to go to college. She grew up on the family farm and had regular duties from as early as she can remember, and there was an expectation of helping out wherever she could. She genuinely enjoyed being on a farm and helping her family, which she missed, but also realizes it was a necessary step. Now Carmen believes she is also tasked with improving the next generation by modeling and succeeding and fulfilling her parents' dreams for her generation.

Carmen (pseudonym) has a traditional Mexican regional cultural name, which she believes highlights her parents' pride in their culture. Before college, she allowed her name to be pronounced with an American standard English pronunciation so that others could easily understand it, but now she chooses to ask others to pronounce it correctly and takes time to explain the roots. This is one of the first things Carmen mentioned about her background in the interview. CAMP played a big part in this after hosting a guest speaker on identity, in which she realized her name was a big part of her identity and her family, something she did not want to

lose. This has also in a way helped her to delineate her pre-college and college life by taking ownership of her own native language and identity. One lesson she has learned from this process is that just because something is easier for others does not mean it is right or just.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) name origin and acknowledging cultural heritage more as part of transition to college, an opportunity to re-define oneself; (b) path forger importance for siblings as the oldest and first to go to college in family, fulfilling parents' dreams; (c) time management skills as part of college transition and CAMP workshops/seminars; (d) challenges and opportunities of transferring faith community from home to college; (e) some individuals in home community as possible detractors from higher purpose, or holding one back from goals; (f) living space as determining factor in one's college transition, including seeing oneself as an independent adult; (g) career path demarcated by female role models, and the appeal of continual improvement (h) CAMP as a holistic support program in which one learns to accept help from more knowledgeable mentors and friends, and (i) business ownership as a means to support and lift up one's entire family.

Nina

Background

Nina is proud of her Mexican heritage, as both her parents came from Mexico in the late 1990's as migrant farmworkers. She has a large family, and they are all important to her and all very close to one another. She considers being there for her other siblings one of her primary jobs in life. She is grateful for her parents and their work; therefore, she wants to support them by doing well in her college studies. Nina describes herself as someone who helps in her community and family as much as she can, and did a great deal of volunteering growing up,

including at church. She took part in a church group and did other forms of service, which she notes is a big part of her family heritage.

Nina overall has good memories of her childhood, complete with opportunities to thrive in both school and community. She also saw the challenges and difficulties other families in her community faced, and how hard her parents worked to support their large family and provide her with those opportunities. She became a summer camp counselor and enjoyed both the leadership role and opportunity to be outdoors. She noticed that children were hungry for both food and love, they wanted to receive more food and attention than they did at home. She recalls that kids got so much from their county camp, and she was proud to be a part of it. Nina was also a youth group leader the past several years before entering college, which gave her exposure to helping. She discovered her affinity for service work during her senior year, which included driving vans and serving at the food pantry. Nina has also held a job after school for much of her high school career. She has seen hunger in her community and children going without, so she wants to help change things like this and even help parents get access to support, learn to prioritize and budget.

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes included (a) reluctance to ask for help at first in college, assumption that a student should know what they are doing; (b) different pace of life on a college campus to adjust to as compared to home community, including the need to prioritize with limited time; (c) allowing farmworker communities to speak for themselves through needs assessments, rather than determined by outside agencies or influence; (d) financial uncertainty impact upon past and current decisions, and effect of pandemic on farmworker families; (e) both heritage and family values promote internal motivation to succeed; (f) physical spaces and traditional imagery of campus are inspiring in working towards fulfillment of purpose in college; (g) desire to

transform the place of women in her culture, and see women as leaders in church and community life; and lastly (h) areas where CAMP support might be improved, including privacy and coordination of roommates.

Part II: A Shared Story of Maria

My Own Part in the Shared Story

In conducting this study, my approach was informed by the principles of co-creation of knowledge and reflexivity, which implies my own experientially limited but relevant understanding (Charmaz, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). I engaged actively with participants and remained mindful of my own positionality, as well as flexible enough to share findings in ways that would best suit the goals of the study and answer the research questions. Throughout the research process, I reflected on my positionality as a researcher and how it might impact my analysis (Sandelowski, 1995), shared in more detail below. As part of this process, I came to realize the delicate balance between reflexive analysis and pragmatism in reporting qualitative findings that might serve a larger community. To analyze all participants' experiences and remain true to the promise of anonymity, I came to the process of weaving together all narratives into one shared story. This student's unified pseudonym is Maria in this section, for the purpose of addressing all six participants as one narrative.

To understand Maria's experiences, I again used a purpose lens with a reflexive pragmatic approach to findings, implications and results, which allowed me to remain open to emergent themes and to build on her own language and meanings. I engaged in constant comparison, journaling, and theoretical sampling to identify key themes and categories. The importance of family and community in Maria's life was a significant theme that emerged from the analysis (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Maria's values and goals were deeply rooted in her family and cultural

background, and she experienced challenges in navigating the transition to college while maintaining her connections with her community. Additionally, the role of support services, particularly CAMP, was a critical factor in Maria's successful transition to college. These services provided her with essential social and academic support, as well as financial assistance, which helped to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety of the transition. By examining Maria's experiences, my analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that migrant students face in pursuing higher education (Gándara, 2011).

While I recognize the potential limitations of shared organizational themes, this approach is the best way I can weave one narrative from many, and at the same time identify patterns and themes that may not have been apparent otherwise to represent this group of 6 women most fully. As I considered the best way to present the findings, I was mindful of the importance of reflexivity and the potential impact of my own positionality on the analysis and interpretation of the data, in choices I made for whose voice would shine through in this single weaved together narrative. Therefore, I drew upon established research and my theoretical framework to introduce each section briefly and provide context for it. Difficult choices often forced me back to the research questions as I considered which thematic areas would best answer them, in alignment with both the primary research questions and the students' individual interview data. The following narrative is the result of this process.

Group Narrative

Goals

Previous research suggests goals and life purpose are closely related. In fact, setting meaningful goals that align with one's values are essential for cultivating a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life (Damon & Mariano, 2012). Maria often chose to focus on their desire to pass

on success and mentor youth, whether that be as an older sibling or as an educator. Because of being around kids so much and learning to support them, this became one of their strongest points of identity. Maria wanted to pursue becoming an educator or community advocate due to the potential impact she could have on others like herself in their home communities. One novel idea was that combining passion areas is a good way to find a niche career. Maria showcased this with her goals, which she believed acted as a compass and will guide her as she learns more, to help her determine the right path after training in the field.

> A teacher for people to turn to and trust, be there for them. I want to create a homey welcoming environment for them [students] in the school, and to eventually buy my parents a home in the community I teach in... also, someday in the future, to use creative writing to write a children's play. (Maria)

A short-term focus for Maria was also on doing well in her coursework, maintaining a good GPA, and finding internships or service positions to help them determine where her best fit might be in education. At the same time, some participants' goals were not so specific, but rather a guiding force. Moving in the right direction was important for Maria more so than accomplishing a specific thing, be that GPA score or income. She explained this in stating, "I believe they act as a compass and will guide me as I learned more, to help me determine the right path after training in the field" (Maria).

A few participants' goals focused more on community advocacy and social justice work outside of the field of education, whether that be in law or social work. Maria thus believes strongly in advocating for her community, and specifically those in need of legal advocacy in migrant communities. Maria included what the 'good life' would mean to her, such as a stable income and predictable work, which their families did not necessarily have all the time growing

up. Maria did not cite specific material items needed to have a good life, but rather generally feeling stable and being in a position to help their community, to do things at will for others. To emphasize this, Maria described:

> [The Good Life] ... I don't think it's anything grand by definition, or that I have to have something to get there. Anything that I'll have after college I predict will be a better life than what I've had up until now... I have all I need. Each day now I spend most of my time on schoolwork or academics, to get there, and this is predictable... I actually like this lifestyle as I enjoy my major and see its connection to my future. (Maria)

Maria also couched her goals in terms of how she would like to be remembered. Her excitement and desire to be of service leapt forward in the interview, such as in her statement below:

> I want to be remembered as being helpful and serving others, I can't say no to people... I want to try to help you as much as I can, like in my work giving 100% all the time, those closest to me and in the bigger picture. I love helping everybody, no matter what. This means to be genuinely happy with what I'm doing and who I'm with and what I'm getting and putting out into world, having a positive impact overall. (Maria)

Maria at times portrayed her goals as being focused on nuclear family, while including service to community and children. Such goals involved bringing financial stability to her family, whether by opening a family business or through home ownership.

> "The good life" would include having my dream job in the social work field and especially helping out children, and in general to be happy with a family and financially stable, being able to support my parents. (Maria)

Values

Values provide a foundation for an individual's sense of purpose, and they can influence the types of goals and activities that a person pursues (Damon & Mariano, 2012; Margega & Steglitz, 2016). In addition, values are important in the identification and pursuit of meaningful goals, as they guide individuals' behavior, decisions, and actions (Martela & Stegler, 2016). Maria often portrayed her home life prior to college as busy and full of responsibilities. Recognizing her own resourcefulness and tools to deal with them seems to be an ongoing source of resilience for Maria. Other values come through in statements such as this:

> I want to be remembered as someone who is hard working, kind, understanding, a good listener or there for a shoulder to cry on... Typically I tend to dislike certain character traits about people but always care about their feelings, what is on their mind at the moment and give advice or just to be there for them. (Maria)

Values can also act as a framework for individuals to evaluate their progress towards their goals and life purpose, which can help them to adjust and refine their goals (Martela & Stegler, 2016). Other values prized by Maria include honesty, organization, respect, responsibility, and never giving up. Work ethic is therefore a big part of both Maria’s identity and her values. She explains that she has always been willing to pick up slack in her family and her jobs, of which she held several before starting college. She was always willing to work doubles, contribute to work on the family farm, and find other opportunities to contribute due to the importance of the extra income for her family. She also looks up to those who work hard and provide for their families, in multiple ways.

When prompted regarding values that impact community specifically, justice and integrity were the top values Maria identified as giving direction to her life and helping her accomplish the life purpose she has in mind. Growing up in a predominantly migrant farmworker community, Maria saw that it was easy to overlook issues that affect migrant families because most of the parents are immigrants who have minimal high school education:

> They may not perceive or understand issues we have in school or community or know how to deal with them or advocate for us. For many in my community, they overlook this. We have one high school and one middle school, which are very crowded. (Maria)

Maria notes that all her values stem from her upbringing, and that she actively uses and applies them every day in college. First, she knows how to stand up for what she values and shares them with new friends in her college, these include:

> Being respectful, having good manners and having integrity, which is doing the right thing when no one is watching, because God sees what you're doing and more blessings come from it, if we have the right intentions (Maria).

She added to this the importance of staying disciplined. She believes that if you are not managing your time, you will fall for anything and spend time in ways you're not supposed to, and to be your best self you need to hold yourself to high standards. Lastly, she values being true to herself by having a private life, such as the ability to keep some feelings and information to herself, which she did not have much opportunity to do growing up in a large family.

Values are deeply embedded in an individual's identity and can serve as a guiding force for the pursuit of meaningful goals, and when an individual's values are aligned with their goals, they are more likely to feel a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their lives (Damon & Mariano,

2012). Additionally, from the above narrative data, one sees that values can help individuals prioritize their goals, providing a sense of direction and focus that we see exemplified in the CAMP students' responses.

Photos and Transition to College

Photos provide a visual and tangible representation of complex experiences, emotions, and perspectives that may be difficult to express through words alone and can also evoke powerful emotional reactions adding depth and richness to participants' responses (Harper, 2020). The majority of Maria's photos were centered on people of influence in her life, from friends and family back home to new CAMP friends in her collegiate life. While these people-focused photos cannot be displayed for the purposes of this study, they can be explained and were helpful in negotiating understanding between researcher and participant. Participants also chose to express themselves in many different ways through photos, and often reflected on shared experiences which they had not prior. Collages and thematic grouping of photos was one way Maria accomplished this. A redacted part of Maria's collage is provided below, in which the creative organization and focus areas are clear but not individuals in the photos (see Figure 2). Most participants did not arrange photos like this until the focus group part of the study, which facilitated deeper sharing. Some of the organizational themes or labels Maria chose to include in this collage were: *Values, Biggest Influences, First Impressions, Places That Remind Me of My Goals, Frequented Places on Campus, Helped in My Transition to College,* and *Challenges I Experienced.*

In some cases, Maria focused on people and even pets from home who have comforted, supported and uplifted her, and still do while in college. Photos highlighted high school graduation, clubs and leadership, siblings and friends from high school. She recalled both

laughter and arguments with her younger siblings, and among these many joyous moments. As she approached her departure date for college, she realized more and more how much she valued her younger siblings and friends. This contributed to some homesickness in her first semester, while learning to navigate and balance new relationships, building a new support system.

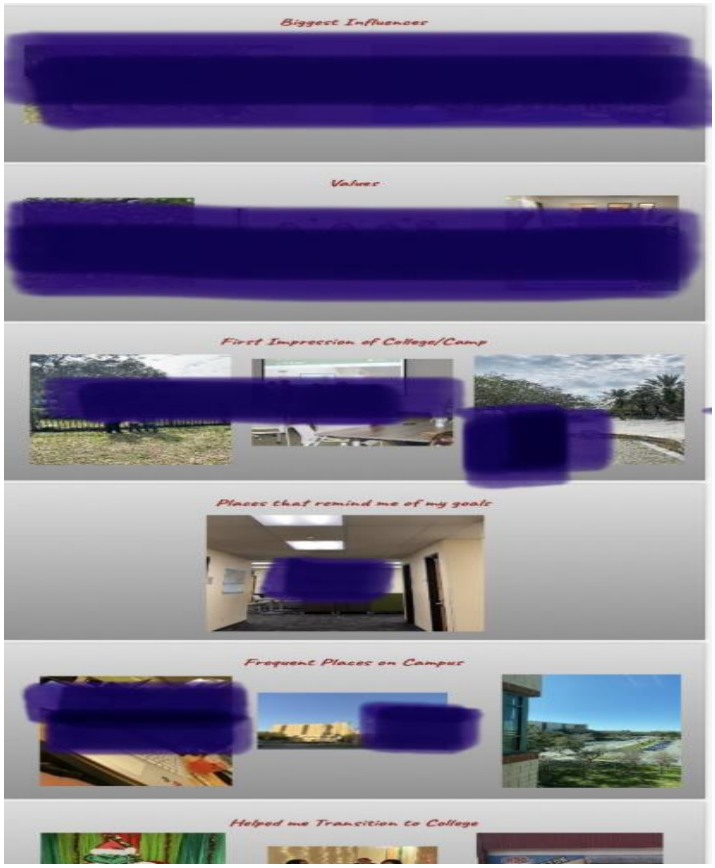

Figure 2. Collage by Participant

In beginning to present the photos which showed first impressions of college, Maria shared photos of how she made her campus home feel like a true home. These included making a fruit bowl for her countertop with another CAMP student, and the freedom of having her own set of keys to her unique space (see Figure 3). Thus, the photos she shared were those that portrayed her family life before college and life during college, as well as her goals and dreams. These were all connected in her mind, and formed a fluid narrative of who she is becoming.

Here, I got my key to the room and moving bin. The key photo was especially important as it felt like the meaning for a brand-new car. You show it off and take it around, it is a symbol of your new life and access. It was a very special moment. (Maria)

Figure 3. Welcome Sights

Maria addressed several difficulties she did not expect in coming to college, as they were vastly different from her pre-collegiate life and culture. In her fall semester, she "tried to do everything all at once and it didn't work out" (Maria). Now, she has chosen to take things slowly and to utilize more resources and mentors, as well as taking time to schedule her time. For example, Maria takes advantage of the CAMP tutoring sessions, where they "provide more than just academic assistance, but also study tips and advice [larger structural support and learning resources]". It was not academics alone that made her transition to college challenging, for Maria

it was a combination of factors, including simply the feeling of difference. During college, she felt different being away from her cultural community norms and "due to a very sudden change of being away from her source of strength, the center of family" (Maria).

The photos also brought out her perspective towards others who might have discouraged or distracted her, or who just didn't understand her reasons for going away to college. She recalled some people at home, including her parents, couldn't imagine why she would want to leave and not just stay at community college, near family. She didn't let it bring her down as she realized that in life not everyone would agree with her, but she followed what she knew would be the best long term. However, as soon as they realized she was taking responsibility and finding her own path through scholarships and CAMP, they supported her and believed in her as the first person going to college in the family. CAMP staff and peers also featured prominently in the photos she chose to discuss regarding her first semester in college, as well as her Living-Learning Community's residence hall (see Figure 4).

Transition from high school to college was difficult in many ways for Maria, "being away from family and friends and entering a whole new world" (Maria). Despite the confidence in her choice of career path, she believes that due to her growing up with so much responsibility, she now often prefers working alone. She has had to balance this with her social-emotional need for connection. She learned that by building more respect and trust from others, she was able to find herself as a person in their midst, and also could enjoy being by herself. Thus, physical location and peer community proved equally important in a successful transition over time, exemplified by her Living Learning Community and spaces surrounding it (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Living Learning Community

She still senses a need to extend her circle of support with others who truly know her, in the same way those in her home community did. She recalled:

> Being away from family is difficult, also feeling different from other people here; [hometown] is a different place to grow up in because everyone is from migrant families, we look alike and have similar cultural backgrounds. The diversity here is crazy, but not many people like me, and I felt like I was the different one. (Maria).

This past fall semester, she had to do a great deal of writing for coursework but was sometimes unmotivated by the subject matter or topics. She enjoyed the writing process even if it

was overwhelming at times. This semester, she spends more time in tutoring and tries to divide her work more evenly, and finish things at home or in smaller time segments if needed that do not draw out her passion as much. With this new approach, she tries not to stress over one assignment for hours on end. One of the difficulties with her transition is that she tends to isolate in the midst of difficulty:

> I tend to keep myself in my own bubble, don't want others to know how I'm feeling so push myself away from them and try to be strong. If I care too much, I think it will affect me more than them, so I have to keep guarded. (Maria)

When prompted to share about the easy or smooth parts of transitioning to college, Maria asserted that in fact very little was easy during her first semester. However, as the fall semester went on, she spent more time in the library and with new CAMP friends, things got easier and more manageable. She describes her friendships on campus being what has allowed her to prosper and feel at home:

> Me and my friends in CAMP are pictured here doing the *Power Ranger pose* like this [photo submitted by participant, see Figure 5] … we love doing spontaneous things, and this shows how close we are and how much fun we have. We're always hanging out at my place, it's very open and lots of room for socializing by the pool. Even if it's cold, we can still be nearby it to relax and be around each other. (Maria)

Her mom also came to campus from time to time during her first semester and did cooking for them, building extended family by making *tres leches* cakes, bringing their culture to campus and having a surprise birthday party for two other friends in CAMP. For parties or

special occasions, she and her CAMP cohort friends prefer foods like *tamales* and *harritos* and *horchata,* that remind them of their cultural heritage and provide comfort.

Figure 5. Power Rangers Pose

She also took on responsibilities and found time to socialize on weekends, as well as through on-campus work which “was enjoyable with newfound co-workers" (Maria). She believes she became better as a person as she engaged with others to learn new coping mechanisms and improved in time management with tools learned at CAMP and from others. She also began to turn in all her assignments, and give more equal focus to all her classes, even if they were not her preferred ones. She believes the structure of CAMP played a huge role in this, as well as the downtime spent with them, as it’s “truly home away from home friends in CAMP, we all look out for each other, and can be ourselves with one another, relax after a long stressful day” (Maria).

Maria also shared photos which featured her family at a church, at a community market with their local produce and doing service work, in which she discussed the importance of faith life in their social time and priorities. Fellowship is displayed by sharing a table and literal fruits of their community’s labor (see Figure 6). Part of her leadership and confidence in helping others

comes from her ongoing service. She explained that she had incrementally taken on more roles and trained others at her home church and is now doing the same at her university fellowship.

Figure 6. Produce in Home Community

Recent research suggests that spirituality can play a critical role in facilitating successful college transitions, as well as in promoting overall well-being and a sense of purpose in life (Astuti & Yulianti, 2020; Parks-Leduc & Schaefer, 2013). With regards to photos taken on campus, Maria also chose to highlight physical locations where she spends time with others and feels surrounded by campus life, including the classroom buildings, library, and a park with fountain near her dorms (see Figure 7). Such photos illustrated novel ways to foster a sense of belonging and provide comfortable spaces for academic pursuits.

Figure 7. Park on Campus

She and fellow CAMP students spent a great deal of time between the library and outdoor spaces to study and eat. Located near to each other they now "feel like a second home" (Maria). Tutoring helped to get to know each other and have a time to plan other meetups later in the evening. They feel free to be themselves and to either study or talk in these campus locations, and exemplifying this she shared a picture the group at one of these study locations late at night. During a study break in one of their favorite indoor classroom spaces, she shared a photo of herself and fellow CAMP students playing *UNO* (see Figure 8). This photo demonstrated their ability to both accomplish academic goals together and support one another through informal relationship building or just enjoying each other's company.

Figure 8. Playing UNO

Self-identified Purpose

Defining or developing one's purpose is a critical component of well-being and success in college; that is, rather than a purpose provided by others for which one decided to attend college, including seeking out a specific major or career path. Research has shown that having a clear sense of purpose can lead to better academic performance, greater satisfaction with college, and better mental health outcomes (Damon et al., 2003; Hill, et al., 2016). Maria sees herself as a successful professional and believes this is her true calling, which will help her discover herself by "becoming more open and getting more out of myself each day" (Maria). She also notes that her part time job helps with financial stability, which is part of her future purpose. She works as a college-based tutor and learns from other educators, thus can better imagine herself in this role. Another part of her purpose is also focused on her own future family:

> To be married and have a partner I can trust and be able to talk to about how I feel and why I feel this way on certain days. To have a family of my own and I also hope that I can financially support my parents, so they don't have to work (Maria).

In addition, sharing the idea of college access with her siblings and leaving home to follow a career path is part of this. In terms of inspiration, she cites knowing how hard her parents worked to help get her to and stay in college and wants to be a part of this for others in her family and youth in her community.

Maria also describes her purpose broadly as making a difference for families and building programs to support those in need. She imagines this will involve doing needs assessments of communities and giving them what they want to have, letting their voice count and direct the services to be provided. She recalls how this purpose began:

> My time as a youth group leader helped me imagine what a ... career would be like and how much an impact I could make, I discovered this mostly during my senior year, including driving vans and serving at the food pantry while taking part in choir and other church volunteering. (Maria).

This provided confidence and allowed her to see a broader spectrum of possibilities in college and careers. She also recalled that summer jobs with youth helped and prepared her for this recognition of a calling, exemplified in the statement below.

> They [kids] wanted more food, attention, and love that they did not get at home, kids got so much from camp…. Also saw in my part time job, I could see that parents could get cigarettes, but kids could not get something to eat. I want to help change things like that, and even help parents prioritize. (Maria).

Maria also sees an opportunity for greater distribution and responsibility for women leaders in the church and in her community and culture, in that she would like to change gender roles and give Latina women more opportunity:

> Instead of traditional roles of just dads working and moms staying at home… I want to show others in my community it could be done differently by my own life, to allow women to follow their goals and dreams too. (Maria)

She attributes much of her success in college thus far to the community bonds with her advisor and students she spends time with daily, noticing what they do and how they share and plan for their future. She also noted comparatively that "people at home are emotionally bottled up, they don't want to share about problems" (Maria), whereas in college some vulnerability and sharing of struggles is more accepted. The living learning community she is a part of in college is at the same time much less directed, she finds she has much more freedom and choice in how she relates to others who share similar goals. At home she "had more direction from Mom and was told exactly what to do" (Maria), so there is a balance between freedom and decision-making by parents that she is still navigating.

Opportunities for Support/Maintenance of Purpose

The subtext of this section is connected to the second research question, in which the study seeks to understand how purpose may affect students' collegiate transition, and vice versa.

Maria's parents are among her biggest supporters. She also had a number of outstanding teaching mentors growing up, including a female history teacher who motivated her to do difficult things and opened the world of writing and reflection to her:

> Motivated us to work hard in difficult times, that there is always someone you can talk to… She cared about our feelings and asked if we were OK, she was also close to our age and freshly out of college… she understood us (Maria).

She has many mentors and people she looks up to in college all somehow associated with the CAMP program. They remind her of her family and the cultural values she brings from home, including ongoing support for one another. While almost daily she misses certain aspects of her home life like watching siblings argue and cry over smallest things, this does not occupy most of her thoughts or sidetrack her emotionally as it used to during her first semester. She believes she has to some degree adjusted to being on her own. Maria also confirms she has many opportunities to practice or live out her values, which she feels helps her further define and outline her own purpose for being in college, and life purpose. This opening to the possibilities of life comes from those examples she sees each day at work on campus. "I see Dr. [pseudonym] every day and she inspires me to work hard, and others in the office… They work hard and do a lot, they help so many students" (Maria).

Maria also cited her faith life as being an integral part of her purpose, noting that she is taking steps to reach what she believes as her purpose in serving God. Thanks to a fellow CAMP friend participating in student fellowship, she is now building a community of fellowship like she had at home. She is involved in weekly student services and is being trained to lead and serve others. Lastly, she feels purposeful as she is carrying this "rekindled faith into a club which helps undocumented students and children and teaching as a volunteer" (Maria). This offers Maria a chance for deeper connection and discernment, as her faith is a big part of her purpose in life, or what she attributes to the *why* behind everything:

> When I don't attend, I miss that connection and part of my faith. I now have friends that go with me... the hardest was not to have someone to go with at first. Faith helps me stay true to myself and be okay with whatever happens. (Maria).

There was a time when she dealt with depression and was not right with herself, but with faith as her priority, it's helping her to improve and grow, to stay alive spiritually and be true to herself. This allows her in turn to do everything else she has on her heart. For example, community service has always been very important to Maria, as part of a small community. At college, she notes that there are similar opportunities to help with charity organizations and food drives. She also believes that inspiring artists from different cultural backgrounds like herself are helpful in unmasking herself, making her less afraid to be different from others. She turns to fiction books and her imagination, when necessary, which reminds her that "you cannot depend on just one person but have to learn to love yourself more in order to trust and find the right people" (Maria).

A large part of Maria's insights into her transition to college reinforced the importance of mental health for success. She stated that she "just wanted to have better mental health and pass my classes" (Maria). She also recalled that she really came into college not knowing anything about mental health and self-care, but now understands a bit more and is doing better, which is in turn helping her to identify her purpose more clearly. She also realized that making this time (to focus on her mental health and self-care) is getting a little bit harder due to the level and difficulty in her major classes increasing. Having one group of dependable friends in the CAMP program, and the structure of CAMP to support her when problems arise, has also helped with the stability and security she feels is needed to support her mental health and pursue her purpose for being at college.

As compared to friendships and peers back home, she spends more time planning her future and taking steps towards it with her current peer group. She also feels freer in many ways to express herself and explore new aspects of her identity. For example, she learned about

cultural heritage and the importance of her name's correct pronunciation, which she then applied to all her future relationships in college and worked with others to help them pronounce it correctly in Spanish. In her financial life at home, she could not do many things in the past because of insecurity/fear of not having enough money, and the pandemic increased this fear and uncertainty of the future. This financial insecurity gives her pause and does still influence her decisions. However, she is taking steps to be more independent and mature financially through CAMP seminars, for example to balance a budget and learn how to get along with roommates. She notes she has lots of opportunity to discuss her future with peers and advisors in the CAMP program.

CAMP Program

The subtext of this section is the research question asking what ways CAMP itself has facilitated transition to college, and development or deepening of purpose. Maria offers many answers to this question from her experience. Maria's most common thought entering college was, "I want to get there but I don't know how to" (Maria). From the very beginning, she asserts that CAMP has answered this question and been the solution to all of her transition obstacles, including financial assistance, tutoring and housing essentials. Tutor access and homework space has also proved to be very important over time, along with mentors and access to advisors.

Maria cited workshops, seminars and social events CAMP provides on a biweekly basis as being the key to her successful transition. This included such tasks as how to find resources on campus and navigate the web to make appointments or find classrooms. This also included financial assistance, such as scholarship searches and knowing how to apply for a do work-study, which she was able to take part in. Most of all she appreciates that she gets to observe staff members and learn from what they do at her college. Workshops and seminars have been the

highlight of her experience, in which she believes she has learned so much over such a short period of time, just over one semester. One such example she provides made a big difference:

> The imposter syndrome seminar was especially helpful, I felt like that a lot during my first semester, and it [seminar] gave me words and ideas to understand what I was going through. To know that others were going through the same thing alleviated a lot of stress. CAMP has also helped me confirm something that was going right, and not put so much pressure on myself to accept when things were good, and I could just relax and enjoy college. (Maria)

During her work on campus, she recalls that she met another CAMP alum from a previous year, and while their majors were different, she was incredibly helpful in providing advice, including classes she should or should not consider taking. She feels supported where she is and relies on CAMP in forming relationships as well:

> CAMP specifically has built part of my community to be residential, or at least gotten me started. I appreciate that they have mentors, who check up on us and have been through what we have been as they are previous CAMP students. Next year, I know there are some ways I can be involved and have an extended network and know past and future students even if they are not part of my cohort. (Maria)

She believes she has also learned two important skills, how to ask for help and how to accept help. Other things that assisted in her adjustment to college included using her planner as a tool, which has helped to organize and know what is coming next. She also could for the first time see all her assignments laid out, and plan for weeks ahead, which was a new skill and a stress reliever.

Two individuals at college in particular helped with her transition, including a CAMP advisor who also doubles as a [non-clinical] therapist, who helped her to overcome challenges and reflect on next steps. Qualities she admires in this advisor include a "laid back yet supportive quality, strict yet best friend combined… I don't have to talk or act a certain way, but feel comfortable around her" (Maria). Second, the campus ministry coordinator from her church was a welcoming presence who encouraged her growth and involvement, and gave her all the resources to do so.

She now knows that she has a new and wider family in Tampa who support all she does. Bi-weekly CAMP meetings were and are helpful to de-stress and get rid of doubts she has in herself. The office recruited her and helped her to fill out a large number of confusing documents. They have also helped her obtain an ideal job. This has brought her out of herself and given her a sense of purpose. The one message she wants to communicate regarding the CAMP program is that they mean a lot:

> To know that I have people I can talk to about financial concerns or situations that occur with classes, or even how my day went. They are very open and caring for each and every student. They listen and try to understand me. I wish there were a way for me to show how grateful and appreciative I am of the CAMP staff for helping me transition and get used to so many things here. That is the main thing. (Maria)

She noted that CAMP has also helped in getting used to the big city and the pace of life, versus more rural life at home. They help "practicing overcoming obstacles, by making time for everything that's important and to building new relationships or support networks at college" (Maria). By focusing on time management, building relationships and listening to others, she has grown a great deal since starting this academic year. She communicates problems more freely

and is comfortable with setting boundaries for herself. Things that have been especially helpful included tutoring, helping peers [other students] to keep focused, and building a community of learning. Again, as Maria naturally doesn't like asking for help, having a mentor to facilitate that has also been very useful at times. She does offer a few considerations that might have made CAMP even more helpful in her transition, or transition of future students:

> CAMP could do better at establishing a sense of privacy or helping us to do so. For example, they question students about where they are often, which I know comes from a good place, but... [speaker intentionally leaves pause] At the same time do more to help with the roommate situation, to know them better beforehand and be able to somehow match them. I got lucky, but it could have been otherwise! (Maria)

Returning to the primary objectives and means at the disposal of the College Assistance Migrant Program to achieve them, we can see from the above qualitative responses that in this case CAMP indeed took an effective holistic approach to student success, recognizing that financial and academic support alone may not be sufficient to help migrant students overcome the challenges they may face. Throughout their transition experience, CAMP also aimed to help students develop a sense of community and belonging on campus and to build the skills and confidence they need to succeed both in college and beyond (Villalpando & Jovel, 2016). In so doing, they helped students more clearly define and concretely imagine their self-identified life purpose, or purpose for being in college. Responses above point to advising, mentorship and work/career exploration as being among the most powerful tools at the disposal of CAMP in this process. Finally, it appears that CAMP provided a means for students to be more fully known and accepted in a diverse campus community through a peer cohort, including their unique cultural background and circumstances as students from migrant farmworker families.

Researcher Reflection on Narrative Writing Process for Maria

As a TCK and later expat educator who has experienced many challenges in adapting to new cultures and environments, I am particularly attuned to the needs of migrant students like Maria. Her experiences resonate with my own struggles to navigate new cultural norms, languages of study and expectations, in addition to what I saw in the field as an educator. In this study and analysis process intertwined with reporting my findings, I continually reflected on my own positionality as a researcher and educator, and how my experiences might shape my interactions with the participants. Due to my prior experience, it was even more important to remain open to different perspectives and to recognize the diversity of experiences within the migrant student population. In other words, I realize that I saw only a limited scope of these in my time as an educator in Immokalee, Florida and Oakland, California.

One of the key themes that emerged from my own interpretation of these interviews is the importance of extended family or siblings in a community of support, which I am comparatively alien to. I was raised by a single parent as an only child, she was also an only child, and we seldom took part in any extended family events. Thus, I never depended on siblings for my support system. I was familiar with my mother as a source of continual support and mentorship, as she was also an accomplished teacher and coach. In contrast, Maria's experiences highlight the critical role that these extended networks can play in students' success in higher education, which I had to familiarize myself with to fully understand. Despite the challenges that migrant students face, I am continually inspired by their resilience and determination, and what a significant role family and community plays in making higher education possible. Their stories are a testament to the power of education to transform lives and open their imagination to new opportunities.

As a new qualitative researcher and an educator of many years, I am always looking for ways to engage with students and co-create knowledge, then present what I find. In using a modified reflexive thematic analysis with a more pragmatic approach to organization, application and data interpretation, I recognize the pragmatic implications of research for students and educational programs also fit within the confines of how they are presented. This approach allowed me to remain open to emergent themes and to build on students' own language and meanings. As this process concluded, I became particularly interested in exploring the intersection of identity and language in educational programs for migrant students and exploring common themes together in the focus group. Several questions remained at the forefront of my mind, including: *How did participants' cultural backgrounds, language and experiences shape their goals and aspirations? How can educators and educational program administrators best support their diverse needs as a group, even if from vastly different backgrounds?*

Part III: Focus Group and Common Themes

Introduction

Within 10 days of finishing the individual interviews, a focus group session was held with all six participants present and lasted 90 minutes. During this focus group, participants were again invited to share photos that were relevant to the research questions and guided by the photo prompts, but in a more intentional way. Instead of going through each question again, we focused on the shared themes below that were generated by the individual interviews. Participants were encouraged to bring up new themes or ideas related to their transition to college in the CAMP program. In general, the synergy of the group yielded more insight into the emergent themes from previous session, and participants seemed emboldened by having peers to speak more honesty. This was especially true of areas in which they struggled or had experienced

challenges within the past. Thus, the photo elicitation technique helped to guide both the individual semi-structured interviews and focus group, as each of the photo prompts were aligned with the research questions of the study. In terms of reflexivity, more in-depth questions, clarification and confirmation questions were posed to the group based upon their previous responses, as well as multiple opportunities for the participants to reflect on the process (Pessoa et al., 2019). This included exploring questions that should have been asked but were not, and research topics they thought should be expired in the future. Time was also allowed for elaboration and reflection on the overall study, as well as welcoming students to add to the data via an e-journal and the member checking process.

Context

Over half of the students interviewed were from Southwest Florida, where much of the tomato crop for the southwest US is harvested. It has been the site of large farmworker rights movements and social justice efforts to increase wages for tomato industry workers, including a push for fair wages on behalf of large corporations like Publix and Taco Bell, encouraging them to take responsibility for where their tomatoes come from and the working conditions there. Films such as *Food Chains* made known the plight of farmworkers that have little recourse in their working environment, nor political power to share their situation. During the focus group, the idea of political power and advocacy arose several times; it was clear that these movements had shaped the way the participants' generation thought of farm work, and their responsibility to advocate for the improvement of the community through their educational opportunities. All participants mentioned this in some way either in their individual interviews or the focus group, but mainly through the personal financial end that they saw in their household, and the struggles

their parents endured to put food on the table. Two students also expressed a desire to do some form of advocacy work professionally because of their experience.

Common Themes

Shared themes revealed through the individual interviews and the focus group, they fit into five overarching categories, which I address below in more depth below:

- Siblings and Family Support
- College Application and Finances
- Why go away to college with CAMP?
- Lessons Learned in Transition to College
- Purpose

Siblings and Family Support

Four of the participants were older siblings and the other two participants had siblings at home. Despite the strong base of support and what loving family roots offered all of these young women to thrive, all agreed that college also allowed them to get away from certain aspects of their pre-college life that were holding them back. All also cited the large number of responsibilities at home, including caring for siblings, helping with family farm and housework, and holding after-school jobs to contribute to the family income. This often left little time for their education and other personal development.

Three of the students had prior experience in the agricultural sector, helping parents in fields during harvesting or high demand times. Four of the students confirmed they liked being away from the chaos of a big family to study and focus on their work, despite their gratitude and love for time spent with family when they visit. One student also noted the lack of stability of being from a migrant farmworker family, and another student agreed with this. Both of their

fathers had traveled seasonally at one point, and this caused a great deal of family stress, as well as the emotional strain of having to carry more of the work for the house and sibling care.

College Application and Finances

Five students noted that they had to do most of the work in applying to college and figuring out the FAFSA process on their own, as their parents did not have experience. The other student had an older sibling that assisted with some of this or pointed her in the right direction. All students also held a paying job before college and carried that professional experience and some knowledge of budgeting with them into the CAMP program. Thus, they were all very aware of the fact that scholarships and financial assistance were necessary for them to complete their degree program at the university.

Making ends meet was a challenge in all of their households growing up, where parents often had to make difficult choices about traveling for seasonal work and potentially leaving the household for months at a time. The participants took on a large role in their households from a young age, whether it be helping in domestic work or in agricultural work in some cases. Two of the students also still pay bills and do online paperwork for their households while away from home, so they are accustomed to being responsible for finances. They all agreed that their native English and computer skills were a benefit to the family, that would be missed in their absence. For this reason, they all maintain communication and assist with household tasks from college, as well as training younger siblings to take over this work.

Why Go Away to College with CAMP?

All six participants took AP classes or community college classes through a dual enrollment program prior to attending university with CAMP and had an idea of what college coursework would be like from this experience. While they all realized they could have

potentially attended classes and stayed at home, they were attracted to the opportunity to experience college in a more traditional way. For two participants this was for more freedom to choose their own path and have the time to focus on studies away from family, and others in the group cited both networking and having a wider circle of educational opportunities. For one student, it was a more visceral feeling that she could not get to where she wanted to be by staying in her hometown, based upon the options she saw and others who stayed nearby for college.

Finally, there was a mutual feeling of burnout or exhaustion with responsibilities at home expressed among the group, coupled with a desire to explore something different than working constantly and supporting their families. Some also mentioned that their university was within a few hours of home, and that it gave them comfort still staying in their home state. This by no means meant that they were running away from responsibilities and relationships at home, to the contrary all maintain strong bonds and a sense of obligation to return their talents and education. Maintaining a balance of connection to home and new friendships yielded the best results for the six participants, who also agreed that isolating or spending too much time on the phone with family back home was not healthy.

Lessons Learned in Transition to College

There were subjects that the participants chose to expand upon in the focus group that I did not ask about, e.g., lessons they had learned from their first semester of college. Some of these may be relevant to future students, as participants had stored them away with an eye towards future mentorship of others. One of the unique dynamics of the CAMP program is that many alumni (second year students) serve as mentors to incoming students. In the case of these six women, they not only demonstrated desire to do so, but were mindful of what lessons or best practices would be most useful to pass along throughout their first semester of studies. Such

intentional and future-oriented thinking about others may have been a powerful protective factor against adversities they faced. These lessons follow in summary form:

- Picking apples or assisting in fieldwork during season is incredibly difficult work, but it allows one to have an understanding of money and how much hard work is required to pay for just a few things. This knowledge helps with budgeting and effort in financial aid work and scholarship applications.
- Some students grew up accustomed to not asking for help and were encouraged not to ask or question authority figures. College allows them the opportunity to flip this paradigm and encourages them to ask. The ultimate goal of questions and finding answers is to get closer to one's goals, for the benefit of family and community, and there is no shame in that.
- Sometimes parents do not see the benefit in going away to college and are not aware of the very early deadlines for applications, both for CAMP and other scholarship programs. So, it is up to the student to seek these out from advisors or searching online, and find mentors to help.
- Latina first generation students like themselves could see other women in positions of authority and influence, as well as being encouraged to navigate non-traditional or more egalitarian roles in relationships.
- It is also up to that student themselves to later demonstrate how productive the university environment and living learning communities have been, then share how they are growing as a result to their siblings, as this encourages more in their generation to attend college.

- Getting to know physical spaces on campus and taking advantage of the services offered, from library to student club meetings, yielded strong engagement and satisfaction. This was expressed in terms of not wasting the opportunity and time with only a few years of higher education at a traditional university.
- Being part of a living learning community and contributing to that community alleviated the stress and hardships that accompany a difficult course load, and provided some of the social-emotional support that family normally provides.
- Participants recommended spending time in CAMP tutoring and attending every event offered, if possible, as even if they did not have specific assignments, it was helpful to discuss upcoming strategies and for study time, or just build community with other students.

Purpose

In this study, students addressed purpose as both a general life purpose and purpose for being in college. We also clarified that a self-identified or self-defined purpose would be one that the student themselves outlined and sought to accomplish, rather than a general idea provided by parents or others. Regardless of this clarification, all participants expressed their life purpose and purpose for being in college in terms of their communities and families; their career path and studies as a means of reaching the larger purpose of support the prior. Thus, the six participants on a whole did not distinguish between life purpose and purpose for being in college, rather there was a fluid understanding expressed similarly between participants, in which attending college would enable them to better pursue their life purpose and contribute to their communities. Put a different way, the first response as to the *why* behind college (from all in both individual

interviews and in the focus group) was that attending college would enable them to reach specific career goals so that they could in turn give back to their families and communities.

Three of the six women envisioned doing so through the means of becoming an educator, and others through degrees in social work, political science/pre-law, and business. All six also wanted to bring financial stability to their families and to their personal future, which were not separate for them. Indeed, they expressed their own success as connected to the success of their family and did not see a separate financial future apart from their parents and siblings. While not all specifically mentioned migrant farmworker communities, they were implicitly referred to when giving back to their community. However, a few students saw their goals more aligned with all individuals in need in their community, regardless of Latino/a heritage or being from farmworker families.

Two participants desired to help their community through social services and in their faith communities either by helping disadvantaged youth or combating alcohol addiction, citing these as common problems in their communities. Five specifically wanted to contribute to the next generation in both their extended families and children in the school system. All students desired to grow in faith life and contribute to their church communities also, whether that be in specific service roles they described or more general (not as elaborative) spiritual purposes.

The theme of giving kids a fighting chance and opportunities like they had was commonly held, and they believed from their ability to attend college they would be able to provide this example and pathway. One of the participants recalled, “Dad was away, and mom had so many responsibilities, couldn’t speak English but had so much on her. I know I want to give other students and kids a chance like I had” (Focus Group).

Long term goals of four of the students involved being more involved politically or in advocacy as well:

> [I want to] increase political engagement, we get overlooked to make our needs known. and improve local government to create change in my hometown. Owning our own property and starting our own businesses is a source of empowerment, and shows what we can do. (Focus Group).

One participant noted that there are so many kids struggling both emotionally and materially in her home community, that she wants to give back to students like she had been in middle school and high school. In this case, she learned how to write to express herself and writing became a source of stress relief or coping. Another participant agreed that writing for the first time helped her understand how she was feeling and why, and the ability to share that with others. All had someone in the educational system, for example a teacher or advisor, that they could confide in and trust, and this made all the difference.

Perhaps the most salient topic with regards to purpose among the group was a capacity for societal and communal responsibility coupled with empathy that far exceeded the standard level expressed by a first-year student in college. The recognition of a need for advocacy and resources for families and youth in their migrant farmworker communities was met by creative exploration of how their goals could align with fulfilling that purpose. They also felt a deeper spiritual calling beyond-the-self and asked themselves how their talents and passions could somehow fill that space, and I believe have both inspiring and insightful results.

Reflection on the Focus Group Process

As a trained logotherapist and retreat chaplain with a modified constructivist and pragmatic approach to reporting research in education, I found that my background influenced

and contributed to my data interpretation in a number of ways. My experience as a chaplain helped me to see the importance of building trusting relationships with participants in the focus groups, which in turn may have enabled them to share their experiences more openly and honestly. This was especially important given the sensitive nature of some topics and the potential for participants to feel vulnerable or even marginalized in a larger university student population. In forming the group and choosing a location, I relied upon CAMP staff to suggest a location that would be comfortable and private, as well as fit into all students' schedules. I also asked students to present photos in whatever format they felt best to foster group discussion, or alternatively not share photos if this was uncomfortable for them in the group. They had a high level of synergy and enthusiasm for sharing on the common themes, once gathered together in one space. I primarily listened and posed a few questions to make sure we touched on the research questions and common themes associated with them at the beginning.

In terms of presenting findings, I approached the process more pragmatically, recognizing that there are multiple ways to organize thematic categories and that different approaches may be more or less appropriate depending on the research question and the data itself. In this case, I began by reading through the new transcripts several times to get a sense of the overall themes and patterns and tried to understand them from within the context of students' individual interviews as well. From there, I again used a combination of deductive and inductive coding to organize the data into categories that reflected the key themes. I noticed myself naturally leaning towards those that related to building communities, faith/spiritual development and engaging in service activities. I also used a reflexive approach to coding, in which I examined my own role in the data interpretation process and considered how my own biases and assumptions may have influenced my analysis.

In organizing the thematic categories, I made a number of choices about how to group and label the data. For example, I chose to group together themes related to why students chose to attend college with CAMP. I also chose to include the benefits of building a faith community and engaging in service as part of purpose rather than separating them into distinct categories, as I felt that these two aspects were closely related and reinforced students' purpose. I also made choices about how to label the categories, using language that was reflective of the participants' own words and experiences as much as possible.

Overall, I found that my training in logotherapy and my pragmatic approach to data interpretation were both valuable in guiding my analysis of the focus group data and common themes. By building trust with the participants and approaching the data with an open mind, I was able to identify key themes and patterns that shed light on their experiences. At the same time, I recognize that there are always choices to be made in data analysis, and that other researchers may approach the process very differently based on their own training and experiences.

Moving forward, I believe that my logotherapeutic and purpose-based lens could be a useful tool for other researchers with similar topics. At the same time, I recognize that logotherapy is not the only approach to understanding meaning and purpose, and that there are many theoretical frameworks that could provide alternative perspectives. I am grateful for the opportunity to have conducted this research with this positive and inspiring group, and for the insights it has provided.

Reflection on Common Themes

Through my work with CAMP and other support services since my own early 20s as a graduate student, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that these programs can have on

migrant students' academic success. It is essential that service providers and educators recognize the unique challenges and opportunities that migrant students bring to our educational systems. Their diverse perspectives and experiences enrich our classrooms and society. In my work with migrant students, I have also seen how important it is to provide holistic support that addresses both their academic and non-academic needs. Mental health and emotional well-being are clearly essential components of student success. One of the most rewarding aspects of my work with migrant students is seeing the transformative impact that education can have on their lives.

In both the narrative writing and common themes, I grappled with the ethical considerations of conducting research with a vulnerable population like these 6 students, recognizing the amount of privilege and authority I had comparatively. I worked to make sure they understood all was their choice, and that I knew much less on the topic than they did, i.e., they were the experts about their experience, and I was the learner. It was important to prioritize their autonomy and to ensure that they feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me.

As an educator, ESE/ESOL coordinator and school counselor for many years, I also understand the importance of building cultural bridges and promoting understanding between different communities, especially on campus where these students suddenly found themselves in the minority. The narratives and shared themes demonstrated their desire to be understood and retain their cultural identity. This is particularly important in the context of migrant education, where cultural competency is essential for effective support. As a TCK and having studied overseas in a non-English speaking institution for several years of high school and university studies, I understand the importance of building cross-cultural competencies. Education can be a powerful tool for fostering greater understanding and empathy, particularly for young adults.

As I completed this portion of the study, I was considerate of the many alternative ways that I have not approached the research, questions I have not asked and opportunities for future inquiry. Reflecting on the diversity of the student experiences captured in the interviews, I am considering the possible use of true exploratory case studies to provide a more nuanced and detailed understanding of participants' lives and contexts within a CAMP program. In addition to narrative and visual methods, I am also considering the use of metaphors and other arts-based approaches to help convey the complexity and richness of the students' experiences.

Finally, as I reviewed the transcripts and notes from the interviews, I reflected on the ethical considerations involved in presenting the findings. I wanted to ensure that the students' confidentiality and privacy were protected while also sharing their stories in a way that is complete, respectful and meaningful. As I considered the best way to present the findings, I tried to keep in mind the goal of the research, i.e., to understand the college transition experience of this unique group of students. To the best of my ability, I remained committed to presenting the data in a way that is accessible and engaging to a range of stakeholders, while also remaining true to the complexity and richness of the students' experiences.

Conclusion

The qualitative data collected from the study revealed several emergent themes that could potentially inform future migrant students. One theme that was evident across multiple participants was the desire to cultivate values of persistence and resilience. This speaks to the challenges that migrant students may face when transitioning to college life, such as navigating academic demands, cultural differences, and feelings of isolation. To overcome these obstacles, it was essential for this group of students to develop the inner strength and perseverance

necessary to succeed in their academic pursuits, which was each participants' primary goal in their current semester.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of building a new campus community through living learning communities. Many participants expressed the need for a sense of belonging on campus, and either CAMP itself or a major-specific LLC provided them with a supportive group of peers with whom they could connect and share their life experiences. Similarly, maintaining and supporting Mexican-American culture through an on-campus student organization was also highlighted by one participant as a way to foster sense of belonging and promote cultural identity in college.

Effective time management was another theme that emerged as an important factor in helping participants adjust to college life. Using a planner and prioritizing tasks can aid in the transition process and ensure that academic and personal responsibilities are met. Additionally, the importance of home ownership and financial stability as primary goals was also noted in most of the participants' narratives, reflecting the desire of many migrant families to establish long-term stability in the United States. In addition, family was consistently noted as an integral part of the purpose for coming to college, with all participants expressing a strong desire to serve their home communities and to take on leadership roles both in their schools and in their broader communities.

Another important theme that emerged from our conversation was the sense of responsibility that many participants felt towards their families and communities. This sense of duty was often linked to a strong faith and a desire to serve God, with participants noting the importance of church and service work in their successful transition to college. The CAMP

program was also highlighted as a holistic support program, providing participants with a community of peers who understand their cultural heritage and celebrate milestones together.

The qualitative data I interpreted also revealed several emergent themes related to the importance of mental health and personal enrichment. Participants noted that isolation was an ineffective coping mechanism and stressed the need to prioritize mental health and schedule time for personal growth and exploration. Many students also expressed the struggle to meet the basic needs of their families while feeling a sense of responsibility to help their parents. Being the oldest sibling often promoted interest in an educator career path and serving as a role model for younger siblings. Creative writing and journaling were commonly used as a means of processing difficult experiences.

CAMP seminars and campus jobs played a significant role in successful transitions to college, and the nuclear family was often the primary source of support. However, one student who experienced homesickness during their first year and relied on both popular culture and heritage culture as sources of inspiration. Despite the reluctance to ask for help at first, she eventually recognized the importance of seeking assistance when needed. The different pace of life on a college campus compared to the home community required prioritizing with limited time as well, for all participants.

Additionally, students expressed a desire to transform the place of women in their culture, seeing women as leaders in church and community life. They also emphasized the importance of allowing farmworker communities to speak for themselves through needs assessments, rather than being determined by outside agencies or influence. Participants also spoke about the importance of mentorship in work or work-study positions providing an opportunity to see female role models in a professional space, which they may not be prevalent

in their home communities. Financial uncertainty also impacted both past and current decisions among several participants, and the pandemic had a significant effect on farmworker families.

Finally, the data revealed the unique challenges that migrant students may face when overcoming obstacles without the support of family. The loss of a parent or other family member can be particularly difficult, and one participant spoke about the need to take on additional responsibilities in order to support their siblings and extended family members. However, most participants also noted their gratitude for residential campus experiences and CAMP peers, which provided a supportive community for celebrating milestones and navigating challenges together.

Lastly, participants identified areas where CAMP support could be improved, including privacy and coordination of roommates. Several participants also saw this as a delicate balance, recognizing that the continual check-ins and touchpoints with advisors kept them on course, even at the same time feeling pressure of being overseen. These findings suggest that future CAMP students may benefit from a balance of mental health resources and personal enrichment opportunities, as well as ongoing support from CAMP staff and other campus organizations that allow them some autonomy. Prioritizing time, seeking assistance when needed, and allowing for cultural and individual differences seem to be essential for successful adjustment to college life, from their combined narratives.

Overall, the emergent themes from this study suggest that future CAMP students may benefit from developing a strong sense of purpose to promote resilience and persistence, which might include building new campus communities through LLCs and student organizations, as well as prioritizing time management and financial stability. Family and community were integral parts of both self-identified purpose and support, with faith life and both peer and adult

mentorship playing important roles in their transition. These were particularly salient with other women and Latina role models in those mentorship positions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of first-generation college students from migrant farmworker families and explore the role of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) in their transition to college. The study employed a qualitative exploratory research design utilizing auto-driven photo elicitation and collected data from 6 participants through in-depth semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The findings were analyzed with a modified reflexive thematic analysis and presented in alignment with the study's three primary research questions.

The participants perceived their transition to college as uniquely challenging due to their backgrounds, but necessary to achieve their goals. The study highlighted various risk factors that participants faced, such as financial constraints, family responsibilities, and lack of academic preparedness. However, the benefits of college education and transition programs, such as exposure to new ideas and opportunities, were also emphasized. The students' sense of purpose played a crucial role in their experience of higher education and transition to college. Having clear goals or direction helped them navigate the challenges of their first year in college and provided motivation to persist through these difficult times. Among the sources of purpose, those that might be classified as *beyond-the-self purpose* proved the most powerful in terms of students' motivation to attend college and pursuit of specific career paths.

The study analyzed the data through a resilience framework and identified potential risk and protective factors. Risk factors included financial instability, lack of access to educational

resources and support systems, communication barriers for parents, poor living and working conditions, limited access to advocacy in local government/educational systems, and limited exposure to college and career options. Protective factors highlighted include positive and supportive family and community relationships, strong work ethic and determination, resilience and adaptability, access to academic and career resources and support programs, bilingual and bicultural competence, involvement in extracurricular activities and leadership roles, access to mentors and role models who have successfully navigated higher education, and cultural heritage awareness with identity formation tools available in the CAMP program.

The study also demonstrated the vital role of the College Assistance Migrant Program in the participants' transition to college and ongoing development of their sense of purpose. The program provided financial assistance, academic support, as well as a supportive community of peers and mentors. Additionally, CAMP provided opportunities to explore purpose through a variety of work-study experiences, workshops, and seminars. Purpose-based interventions may help first-generation students in the CAMP program develop a sense of purpose and direction in their lives, which can in turn help them overcome significant challenges associated with migrant farmworker families. Based on the study's findings, purpose-based interventions that may be effective in working with students from migrant farmworker families include goal setting, career exploration, mentoring, community involvement, self-reflection, and networking.

Findings are summarized in the following areas, in alignment with the three overarching research questions of the study:

A. Perception of transition: Participants perceived their transition to college as challenging and isolating at the start, but saw this as a necessary step to achieve their goals and building a wider network of support. They faced several obstacles or risk factors such as

financial constraints, family responsibilities, and lack of academic preparedness. However, they also highlighted the benefits of college education and college transition programs, such as exposure to new ideas and opportunities, and a chance to break away from the limitations of their pre-college life. They also communicated opportunities to find mentors, witness female leaders in their work, and embrace new physical spaces on campus as part of their transition.

B. Impact of sense of purpose: The students' sense of purpose played a crucial role in their experience of higher education and transition to college from high school. Having clear goals or direction helped them navigate the challenges of their first year in college and provided motivation to persist through difficult times. They identified various sources of purpose, such as a desire to help their families and communities, serve youth or pursue a career that would enable them to give back, have personal enrichment and growth opportunities, be financially stable and allow their families to be financially stable. Among these, beyond-the-self purpose was the most persistently cited and most powerful in terms of students' motivation to attend college and pursuit of specific career paths.

C. Role of the CAMP program: The College Assistance Migrant Program played a vital role in the students' transition to college and ongoing development of their sense of purpose. The program provided financial assistance, academic support, and a supportive community of peers and mentors. It also provided opportunities to explore purpose through a variety of work-study experiences, workshops and seminars. Overwhelmingly and unanimously, participants expressed gratitude for the program and its staff members, and highlighted CAMP's role in helping them to explore, understand and achieve their educational goals.

Previous Research Alignment

Purpose

Connecting CAMP students with mentors who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement can help them navigate the challenges of college and build their confidence. Female mentors or Latina role models can be particularly helpful in providing insight into the college experience as part of a marginalized group and helping students identify their strengths and set high aspirations for themselves (Samaan & Huang, 2020). Furthermore, research on student purpose and resilience theory suggests that having a sense of purpose can contribute to resilience in the face of adversity (Cotton et al., 2018). The students' desire to give back to their community and provide opportunities for the next generation can be seen as a form of resilience, as they are striving to overcome the challenges they have faced and create a better future for themselves and their families.

With regards to purpose development and career exploration, the importance of mentorship aligns with Nunez's (2014) argument that we should consider the role of social networks in shaping educational outcomes. The financial uncertainty faced by participants is part of this need and aligns with Nunez's (2014) argument that structural factors such as poverty can impact educational outcomes by essentially reducing the number of choices accessible to Latina/o migrant students entering higher education. Their opportunity to imagine different futures and see others like themselves in these positions can yield a more complex and elaborative purpose.

The students' sense of purpose and their goals for the future in this study can also be understood through the lens of ecological systems theory, which posits that an individual's development is influenced by multiple systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this case, the students'

goals were influenced by their immediate environment and their cultural and societal values. Participants' goals also demonstrate a strong sense of communal responsibility and empathy, which is consistent with research on purpose and prosocial behavior (Damon et al., 2003). The participants' desires to help combat alcohol addiction in their community, contribute to the next generation, and improve local advocacy or education administration all reflect a desire to make a positive impact on their community. The role of creative writing and journaling as a means of processing difficult experiences identified also aligns with the importance of purpose and self-discovery identified by Damon et al. (2003); Activities that promote growth and self-discovery, such as creative pursuits can help cultivate a sense of purpose, which can lead to positive outcomes in young people. Overall, the students' goals and sense of purpose reflect the influence of their immediate environment, cultural and societal values, and a desire to make a positive impact on their community. These are consistent with research on ecological systems theory, student purpose, and resilience theory.

Intersectionality

The findings of the study also align with the concepts of intersectionality as outlined by Crenshaw (1989; 2017). Crenshaw (2017) argues that individuals occupy multiple social positions that intersect and interact with one another to shape their experiences of oppression and privilege. This is evident in the experiences of migrant students who face challenges related to their race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Nuñez (2014) does similar work more specifically looking at intersectionality with Latina/o students and college access, and her conclusions support the use of intersectionality in educational research, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how multiple factors contribute to educational outcomes.

My study's findings demonstrate the importance of taking into account the intersection of race, class, and gender in understanding the experiences of migrant students. In addition, the themes related to mental health and personal enrichment reflect the importance of considering the social and emotional well-being of students. This aligns with Nunez's (2014) argument that researchers should consider the multiple levels of analysis that contribute to educational outcomes, including individual, family, community, and structural factors. Smith et al. (2021) also conducted a qualitative study exploring the challenges and opportunities faced by migrant students in the transition to college, and found that students experienced unique challenges when trying to overcome obstacles without the support of their families. The authors suggest that community and social support are crucial for the success of migrant students (Smith et al., 2021), which aligns with the importance of CAMP support identified in my study.

Additionally, my findings provide more migrant student specific insight into studies such as by Solórzano et al. (2018), which examined the experiences of first-generation Latino students in higher education, which also found that students often feel a sense of responsibility to help their families and struggle to balance their own needs with those of their families. The authors findings suggest that cultural values, such as *familismo*, can provide a source of strength and support for students, which aligns with the role of family and cultural values identified in my study (Solórzano et al., 2018).

Finally, the desire to transform the place of women in their culture aligns with Crenshaw's (1989) argument that feminist theory must be inclusive of the experiences of women of color. This includes recognizing the ways in which race, ethnicity, and culture intersect with gender to shape women's experiences, present in the participant narratives in this study. The struggle to meet basic needs while feeling a sense of responsibility to help their families also

aligns with Crenshaw's (2017) intersectionality framework, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of social positions and how they impact individuals' experiences. The students' desire to become female leaders and role models to others as leaders in church and community life aligns with the ongoing discussion of equity and representation in higher education for underrepresented groups (Cranston-Gingras, 2000). In terms of improving CAMP support, the students' concerns with privacy and coordination of roommates have also been noted in previous studies (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017).

Cultural Context: Migrant Farmworker Children

The experiences shared by the participants also align with previous research on farmworker students regarding Community Cultural Wealth (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012). This framework acknowledges the strengths and resources that students from marginalized backgrounds possess, including their family's cultural and linguistic capital, and recognizes these as valuable assets that can be utilized to succeed in higher education. The struggles faced by the student, such as the difficulty in meeting basic needs and dealing with financial uncertainty, have also been noted in previous research (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017). More specifically, Escamilla and colleagues (2014) investigated the factors contributing to successful completion of undergraduate degrees by students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and found many of the same themes identified in this study. The student's positive experiences with the CAMP seminars and campus jobs align with the positive impact that a CAMP has had on students in previous studies.

The students' experiences with isolation and the importance of mental health further align with Crisp and Nora's (2010) study on factors influencing the persistence and transfer decisions of Latino community college students enrolled in developmental education. The study found that

students who utilized support services, such as counseling and tutoring, were more likely to persist and transfer to a four-year institution. Furthermore, Mariano and Damon (2008) discussed the role of religious faith and spirituality in the development of purpose, which aligns with the student's use of faith communities on campus, heritage and family values as a source of internal motivation to succeed in college. Mariano (2014) also emphasizes the importance of understanding the content and contexts that influence a student's path to purpose, which includes their cultural and familial background.

The students' struggle to adjust to the different pace of life on a college campus and the need to prioritize with limited time align with the challenges faced by farmworker students as noted in Cranston-Gingras and Rivera-Singletary's (2017) article on educational initiatives supporting students from migrant farmworker families. Additionally, allowing farmworker communities to speak for themselves through needs assessments, rather than determined by outside agencies or influence, has been highlighted as a best practice in facilitating educational success for migrant farmworker students (Perez & Zarate, 2017).

Physical Spaces

One theme emerged which was unexpected and for which I had not identified previous research, but sought to understand thereafter, that of the importance of physical spaces and natural spaces in students' mental health and adjustment to college. Several studies have found that the welcoming and accessible physical spaces can significantly impact students' well-being and academic performance (Cohen et al., 2014; Kuh et al., 2006). Studies have also found that creating inclusive physical spaces that reflect the diversity of the student body can positively impact the sense of belonging and academic success of marginalized students (Harper, 2012; Smith, Schonfeld, & Pancer, 2019).

Cohen and colleagues (2014) found that students who were exposed to natural environments, such as green spaces on campus, reported lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being than students who were not exposed to such environments. This matches with one of the participants' favorite locations on campus being outdoors and set apart, where they felt they could relax and be themselves. Similarly, Kuh and colleagues (2006) found that the physical design of campus buildings can impact students' sense of community and belonging, which in turn can affect their academic success. The nearness of the library and their CAMP home building to their residence halls was noted by students, and how these formed a welcoming triangle of community. Buildings that are designed to foster social interaction, such as communal spaces or shared kitchens, were also found to promote a sense of community and belonging among students, which can positively impact their overall college experience (Kuh et al., 2006). Creating prayer or meditation spaces for minority students, or creating resource centers, can also help to promote a sense of inclusivity and belonging on campus (Harper, 2012). In combination, these studies suggest that the physical environment of college campuses plays an important role in the adjustment of undergraduate students. Creating physical spaces that promote well-being, social interaction, and a sense of community can help students to adjust to college life and succeed academically.

Overall, this study's findings highlight the importance of considering the multiple factors that contribute to the experiences of migrant students. By using an intersectional or identity framework, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of how social positions interact to shape individuals' experiences of college. This can inform the development of interventions and programs that support the success of migrant students in higher education. The students' experiences and challenges align with previous research with students from migrant farmworker

families and highlight the importance of understanding and utilizing a student's cultural and familial background as assets to succeed in higher education.

Resilience Framework: Summary of Risk and Protective Factors

I used a resilience framework to analyze qualitative data and shared themes generated by reflexive thematic analysis, which identified potential risk factors for college access for marginalized student populations. These risk factors include financial instability due to low wages and seasonal work, lack of access to educational resources and support systems, limited English proficiency and communication barriers for parents, poor living and working conditions that can impact health and well-being, limited access to healthcare and other basic needs, limited exposure to college and career options, stigma associated with mental health treatment, and negative stereotypes / discrimination in traditional college application procedures.

Despite these challenges, protective factors highlighted by the analysis include positive and supportive family and community relationships, strong work ethic and determination, resilience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, access to academic and career resources and support programs, bilingual and bicultural competence of students, experience of both student mentors and CAMP support staff reflecting their bicultural and bilingual competence, involvement in extracurricular activities and leadership roles, and access to mentors and role models who have successfully navigated higher education, through programs like CAMP.

Programs like CAMP, which provide culturally relevant academic, financial, and social support to students from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds, have been shown to be effective in promoting college access and success for marginalized student populations (Reyes et al., 2015). Moreover, such programs not only provide resources and support to students, but also

promote cultural heritage pride and tools for identity formation available to them in the CAMP program (Favela et al., 2019). By addressing the potential risk and protective factors highlighted by the research, programs like CAMP can help to promote college access and success for marginalized student populations.

It is notable that many of these protective factors apply to the aforementioned TCK population, in terms of adaptability and bilingual/bicultural competence, but very few of the risk factors apply to TCKs. It's also important to note that these risk and protective factors can vary depending on the individual and their unique circumstances, and that some factors can both be a risk and protective factor depending on how they are experienced. For example, strong community ties may prevent a student from taking an internship opportunity far from home. It's also important to recognize that there are many other factors which may not have been identified in this study's emergent themes, and that the above factors may interact with each other in complex ways not explored in the context of this study.

Purpose-based Recommendations

Purpose-based interventions aim to help individuals identify their values, interests, and goals in order to foster a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. These purpose-based interventions can help first-generation students in the CAMP program develop a sense of purpose and direction in their lives, which can help them overcome the challenges of being a first-generation college student and succeed in college and beyond. Based upon the qualitative data shared and modified reflexive thematic analysis I employed, below are purpose-based interventions identified that may be effective in working with students from migrant farmworker families:

- Goal setting: Encourage students to set short-term and long-term goals that align with their values and interests. Help them break down their goals into actionable steps and provide resources and support to help them achieve those goals.
- Career exploration: Offer career exploration workshops and resources to help students identify potential career paths that align with their interests and values. Provide opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience through internships, job shadowing, or other experiential learning opportunities.
- Mentoring: Connect students with mentors who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement as they navigate the challenges of being a first-generation college student. Identifiable female mentors or Latina role models can help students build their confidence, set high aspirations for themselves, identify their strengths, and provide insight into the college experience as part of a marginalized group.
- Community involvement: Encourage students to get involved in their local communities by volunteering, participating in community events, or joining clubs and organizations. These activities can help students build connections, develop leadership skills, and contribute to their communities.
- Self-reflection: Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their values, interests, and experiences, inclusive of their cultural heritage. This might include journaling, faith-based activities, mindfulness exercises, or group discussions. Help students express both their strengths and challenges, and encourage them to set goals to make plans for personal growth.
- Networking: Help students build their professional networks by connecting them with alumni, employers, and other professionals in their fields of interest.

Implications for Practice in CAMP Programs

Based on these findings, some key recommendations for CAMP programs specifically are that stakeholders would coordinate to do the following during the college transition process, some of which are already taking place:

- Encourage students to explore their personal values and interests to identify a meaningful purpose for attending college. This can involve one-on-one discussions with students, as well as group activities to encourage reflection and self-discovery.
- Incorporate orientation to physical spaces on campus, including places of opportunity for faith practice, prayer and meditation that are open to and welcoming to diverse students from different cultural backgrounds.
- Continue to develop a sense of community among first-generation college students by creating opportunities for students to connect with each other, share their experiences, and provide support. This might involve organizing social events, peer mentoring programs, and other initiatives that foster a sense of belonging.
- Provide career counseling and support services to help students explore their options and make informed decisions about their future. This can include workshops and job shadowing opportunities that are local and not cost prohibitive.
- Encourage students to engage in community service and volunteer activities that align with their personal values and interests. This can help students develop a sense of purpose and make meaningful connections with a broader field, be that in education or business or social work.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in research, internships, and other experiential learning activities that allow them to apply their classroom learning in real-

world settings. This can help students connect their academic work to their personal goals and aspirations, as well as develop a sense of purpose and direction.

- Continue to offer a combination of academic support services such as tutoring, academic coaching, and study skills workshops to help students succeed academically. This can help students build confidence and develop a sense of purpose as they make progress towards their educational goals.

Implications for Future Research

Based upon the findings of this study, areas of future research that should be explored include long-term outcomes, purpose as a protective factor and potential purpose interventions to aid transition and retention, and development of culturally responsive programs. Further research that could explore the long-term outcomes of Latina college students from migrant farmworker families. This could include their educational and career trajectories, as well as their contributions to their communities and families. Understanding the long-term impact of college education on this population could inform both educational policy and programmatic interventions. Future research could investigate how to foster and sustain a sense of purpose among college students from migrant farmworker families. This could include identifying strategies to help students clarify their goals and aspirations, as well as interventions to provide ongoing support and motivation.

Lastly, the success of the CAMP program highlights the importance of culturally responsive programs and interventions for this population, yet very few students are given this opportunity relative to the entire population of their communities. Future research could explore the characteristics of effective programs and identify best practices for supporting migrant students and examine issues or barriers affecting Latina women specifically. This could include

examining the role of mentorship, community-building, and financial support in promoting both academic success and a sense of purpose among students from migrant farmworker families.

Conclusion

Overall, the use of a modified reflexive thematic analysis allowed me to gain a rich understanding of the experiences of first-generation college students in the CAMP program and provided insight into how the program can best support these students in their college journey. In addition, a purpose framework provided an effective lens for understanding CAMP students' transition to college. This approach emphasized the importance of personal meaning and values in shaping individuals' goals and aspirations, which is particularly relevant for students who may face additional challenges and barriers in navigating the college environment. By understanding students' purpose for attending college and providing support that aligns with their values and interests, educators and support services can help promote a sense of belonging, foster academic success, and facilitate a smoother transition to college for migrant background students. Furthermore, a purpose framework helped me to understand and to counter deficit-based assumptions about students' abilities and potential, and instead highlight their strengths, aspirations, and potential for success.

In addition, the use of auto-driven photo elicitation as a research method both stimulated discussion and elicited insights about their experiences that otherwise may not have been possible. This method proved a non-threatening and accessible way for students to express themselves and share their experiences, especially for those who may struggle with verbal expression or feel intimidated in interviews or group discussions. Secondly, auto-driven photo elicitation revealed insights that may not have been captured through traditional interviews or surveys, as participants were able to choose and interpret their own photographs, allowing for a

more nuanced understanding of their experiences. Lastly, this method helped me as a researcher gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which students of migrant farmworker backgrounds navigate their transition to college. I do not believe such depth of understanding and personal connection would have been possible using traditional interview methods. Selection of photos that primarily included other people precluded the participants' photos from being displayed in narrative reports or other results but were nonetheless extremely effective in their primary purpose of eliciting richer qualitative data.

This group of young women from migrant farmworker families faced several challenges in applying for and transitioning to college, including less opportunities to take advanced courses due to their parents' demanding work, their own obligations to support their family, and often living below the poverty line despite this. Additionally, they may have limited access to academic advising or college counseling, and first-generation Latina/o students may not regularly seek it out due to lack of parental experience or past negative experiences. Non-native speakers also face challenges, including lagging behind their peers due to a lack of bilingual services and bridge programs in rural high school systems. The College Assistance Migrant Program offers a solution to nearly all of these above risk factors, and successfully provided support during the first year of studies to counteract these.

The study's findings may help higher education administrators and educators become more aware of the lived experiences of migrant students and what motivates them in terms of goals and purpose for their education. This awareness can help new students better adjust and form successful long-term relationships in the collegiate environment. Furthermore, the study may lead to the development of more culturally relevant ways to foster resilience, cross-cultural

communication skills, flexibility and adaptability, and skills in working with those different from themselves in migrant students, leading to academic success.

In summary, this study has demonstrated the importance of the College Assistance Migrant Program in supporting the transition of first-generation college students from migrant farmworker families. The findings highlight the potential risk and protective factors that influence their college experiences, and the importance of a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. Purpose-based interventions can help students develop a sense of purpose and direction that can enhance their motivation and resilience in the face of multiple challenges. These findings have significant implications for practice in higher education with migrant students and perhaps with other stakeholders that seek to support marginalized and first-generation college students.

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APPENDIX A: INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pre-Interview Discussion Text

My name is Mark Lane-Holbert and I will be the interviewer during this time together of about 45 minutes. I am also the primary investigator, i.e., person conducting the study, as part of my doctoral dissertation research within the College of Education. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about your transition to USF through the College Assistance Migrant Program.

You have already read over and signed a consent form. I would be happy to review it now, or answer any questions you may have, or to provide you with another copy at this time or after our session by request. (pause) *Possible Prompt if no definitive yes/no: Do you have any questions or would you like a copy?*

Most importantly, if you feel you need to leave, cut the interview short or take a break for any reason, you are free to do so, please just let me know or request a break at any time.

You have been asked to participate in the study by selecting or taking some photos to represent your college transition experience in the CAMP program, do you have those and are you willing to share some of them?

If yes: Do you understand that these are your original work, but may be shared or published for the purposes of this study to help explain your experience?

If yes: Please let me know at any time if there are any photos you would not like to share with a wider audience, for any reason.

If no: Discuss the study details more and answer concerns.

It is my hope that your experiences and selected photos will work together to bring up new ideas and themes that will contribute to our knowledge and our focus group as well, which will be held with five of your peers shortly after we finish the 1:1 interviews, which will take about 90 minutes.

Are you still willing to do so?

If yes: After the conclusion of our interview and the other students' interviews, the information we discussed will be explored, categorized into themes and a focus group will be scheduled; Based upon your and other students' availability, it may meet in person or via MS Teams online. Neither your name nor other identifiers will be used when sharing information, photos or conversation from this interview.

Any questions about today or what will happen after our interview?

(take time to answer or address any questions)

Proceed with questions protocol: Note that I have separated the questions into sections that relate to the research questions, both for transparency and to foster alignment with the purpose of the study.

I. **Introduction:**

a. Tell me a little about yourself. What kind of person are you?

b. What are things you really care about? / What is most important to you in your life?

Why do you care about that? / Why is that most important to you?

c. Do you have any long-term goals in your life? What are a few of the more important ones? Why are these goals important to you?

If yes, Are you doing anything now to achieve these goals or objectives?

If yes, what are you doing?

If no, what has kept you back from doing something to meet these goals?

If no, That's interesting, why do you prefer not to have goals? / What does it mean to you not to have goals?

d. What does it mean to you to have a good life?

e. What does it mean to you to be a good person?

f. What would you say you spend most of your energy on these days?

g. Looking back on your life, how do you want to be remembered, or what do you what to be remembered for? Why?

h. General about Photos: Can you take a few minutes to describe your photos, and the process of choosing/taking them?

i. Potential Follow-up: What was your experience like (in this photo)?

RQ1- How do students of migrant farmworker families perceive their transition to college and what most impacts this transition?

II. **Transition to College**

a. What big goals do you have for this semester and this year, specifically? And for college overall?

If student has goals- Why would you say you are motivated to achieve those?

b. What was it like leaving your community and friends to enter university life? *(ask to show photos if they relate)*

c. Follow-up: What is your community like here as compared to your home community? *What are your relationships like as compared to... What are the similarities/differences?*

d. What values did you bring to college, that are important to you now? *(provide examples)*

e. Were these passed on from your family, or a particular person?

f. What would you like to share in general about the adjustment to college? *(prompt: photos to explain)*

g. What were the smoothest/easiest things about your time here?

h. More difficult parts about your experience coming to USF? *What did you learn from/why might this help you? Did any of your self-identified values help you in navigating this?*

i. Tell me about changes that have taken place for you and in you, if any *(due to coming to USF).*

j. What has helped you to successfully adjust to big/small changes or moves, to college or others in past?

Big RQ2 How does a sense of purpose impact the students' experience in higher education?
Sub-question: How does a sense of purpose impacts students' college education/educational transition, and how college might influence their purpose?

III. **Inspiration of purpose/formative experiences** (if participant provides multiple goals in question #1b, ask the following for each of their goals):

a. Earlier you talked about [x] being important to you. Can you tell me how/why this became important? When did it become important to you?

If pertinent, can you describe that a little more thoroughly for me?

If pertinent, how did you get involved in [x]?

If pertinent, what did you need to know in order to work toward your aim?

If someone your age was interested in [x], how would you tell them to get involved/learn about it?

b. Would you say your friends and family are concerned with the same things? Have your friends, family and other people in your life generally supported or opposed your efforts?

c. *If pertinent,* have you gotten others involved in your efforts? *If yes,* how did you do this?

d. Apart from particular people, were there other things that influenced you (e.g., books, films, particular experiences, etc.)?

e. Is there someone who helped you act on your goal(s) initially?

f. Why did you get involved with this particular objective or cause rather than with a different one?

IV. **Opportunities and supports for maintenance of purpose:**

a. Do you look up to anyone? Do you have a mentor? Are there qualities in this mentor, or in others, that you admire?

b. Who are the most important people in your life in college community and away from college, right now? Why are they in particular important to you?

V. **Obstacles, pressures and rewards:**

a. Do you think having a sense of purpose or goals has helped you overcome challenges in college, if any?

b. And in terms of overcoming the difficulty of college transition? *Please describe, and share if any photos relate to this.*

c. Has it been hard for you to remain dedicated to this aim? Will it be difficult for you to remain committed down the road?

d. *(If yes to a):* What were the obstacles? How did you overcome them?
e. Assisted in your adjustment? Please explain, and if any photos tell more about this.
f. If you faced challenges or suffering in your past, how does that fit into or contribute to growing into what you want to be, or what you want to do?

VI. **Future goals and responsibilities:**

a. Are there qualities that you possess that helped you in achieving the goals that are important to you? Are their qualities that you possess that have made it more difficult?
b. Picture yourself at say, 40 years of age. What will you be doing? Who will be in your life? What will be important to you? What will be going on in the area that concerns you?
c. What are your plans in the immediate future, say the next few years?

VII. **Categories of Purpose:**

i.) *Family/Relationships:*

a. Tell me about your friends and family.
b. How important are they to you relative to the other things in your life? Why?
c. Do you want to have a family of your own some day? Why? How important is that to you? Why?
d. Do you do anything special to show your family or friends that they are important to you?
    a. *If yes,* what do you do? Why?

ii.) *Faith/Religion:*

a. What role does religion, faith, spirituality, or God play in your life, if any?
    If pertinent, How important is your faith? Why?
    If pertinent, Does your faith/religion influence your goals? *If yes,* how?
    If pertinent, Is it important to you to live according to your beliefs or values?
    How important is it? Why?
    If pertinent, Do you do anything special that shows your God/faith/religion/spirituality are important to you?
b. Are you active in a Church or organized religion?
    If pertinent, What kinds of things do you do there?
c. Have your faith, values or spiritual practices helped you in your transition to college, or to identify/search for your purpose?

iii.) *Community/ Service:*

a. When you think of your community, whom do you think of? Why?
b. Is that community important to you? Why or why not?
c. Does your community play a role in your life?
d. How important is your community to you? Why?

e. Do you do anything to help improve your community? Do you do any community service?
    a. *If yes,* what do you do? Why do you do it?
f. Do you do any volunteer work? Why?

RQ3- In what ways does the CAMP program itself facilitate successful transition, and development or deepening of purpose?

a. Please tell me about the CAMP program. How has CAMP specifically helped with regards to your transition?

b. What has been challenging about CAMP? Could do better?
Workshop/seminar on "how to find" (navigate web) and get resources...

c. Has anything else changed for you, due to participation in this program?

d. Follow-up: Anything else you would like to share about CAMP, or your transition to college so far?

VIII. **Closing:**

a. We're coming to the end of the interview, is there anything you would like to add?

b. We will have our focus group (a group discussion similar to this one, again using photos) within two weeks, made up of all six participants, which will focus on themes uncovered in this interview and possibly discover new ones together. Would you still like to and be available to participate?

c. *If so:* What means to do prefer, in person here at the College of Education near the CAMP Program office, or online using MS Teams?
What are the best times and days of the week for you?
May I follow up with you about scheduling this as I hear back from the other participants?

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

November 18, 2022

Mark Lane-Holbert

[redacted]

Dear Mark Lane-Holbert:

On 11/18/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY004875
Review Type:	Exempt 2
Title:	Transition to Higher Education in a College Assistance Migrant Program: Students' Perception of Purpose
Protocol:	• MRLH Social-Behavioral Protocol with edits 10.7.22.docx

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Gabriela Plazarte
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

APPENDIX C: STUDY EXPLANATION FOR RECRUITMENT EMAIL/FLYER

EVER WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY, TO HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD?

THEN HELP US LEARN ABOUT CAMP & YOUR TRANSITION TO COLLEGE!

University of South Florida, Approved IRB Study #004875

Who? Any current USF student in the College Assistance Migrant Program is eligible!

What? This study is being conducted by a graduate student at the University of South Florida, in the College of Education's Educational Psychology PhD program. The purpose of the study is to understand the first year transition experience of students, and explore if self-identified purpose (including bigger goals in life) play a role in this transition.

How? WE'LL TAKE/SELECT SOME PHOTOS AND TALK ABOUT THEM! Student participants will take and share about photos they choose to represent various aspects of their transition to college! (or select photos you've already taken) These photos will give voice to your everyday life experiences at USF and transition to college. You'll then have an opportunity to share about them during an interview lasting about 45 minutes with the researcher, and to take part in a focus group with about five other students (lasting 90 minutes).

Where? Both can take place using Microsoft Teams online, or in person at the College of Education, according to participant preferences.

Why? To learn more about how students like yourself transition to college, to better understand the experiences you have, and possibly help future students in programs like CAMP at USF. You are being asked to participate because you are part of the College Assistance Migrant Program current cohort of students, and you have valuable experiences to share!

When? This spring semester of 2023, the total time commitment is about 2.5 to 3 hours, spread over approximately three weeks during the semester. Meetings will take place via Teams online.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Compensation, and Risk: There is no cost to participate. You will be compensated $25.00 with an Amazon Gift Card for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

For more information or to volunteer, contact: Mark Lane-Holbert, Principal Investigator, by email or MS Teams message: mholbert@usf.edu

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT PHOTO ELICITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please take or select 10-20 photos which highlight something meaningful in your experience as a first semester student, based upon the prompts below. The only photos of private spaces permitted are your own, not shared private spaces such as a shared bedroom or living space, due to issues of privacy and others not giving formal consent. When taking photos in public spaces (i.e., places where anyone can access; outdoors, classrooms, university commons), we also ask that you not include photos with identifiable faces of people, due again to the concern that they have not given consent to participate in the study. If there are identifiable faces of individuals in your photo who are not participants in the study, and you nonetheless share them in person or as part of your photo presentation, these would be left out of any future publication, or at least blurred to protect the identity of any individuals who did not provide consent.

You will be asked to explain a bit about each photograph, and why you selected it for the given prompt. You can arrange them digitally on an app/device (i.e., computer or smart phone, as a PDF or slideshow), or print them and make a collage. You will also be provided access to a color printer and poster printer, should you choose to print them. You may of course take as many photos as you like on your phone/other device, however, you'll be asked to narrow down your selection to 1-2 photos representing each of the following areas, for the purposes of sharing in your presentation/collage, with the researcher and focus group:

1) Photos demonstrating your home or life period before coming to college (home town, family, culture, etc.), including what influenced you most.

2) Photos highlighting values that are important to you, including those passed down from your family / community / friends / mentors.

3) Photos showing your first impressions of college, and of the CAMP program.

4) Photos representing the goals you have for college (can also be places that remind you of those goals, for example).

5) Photos of most frequented places on campus or in college life off campus (i.e., most time spent, could be academic or living spaces or recreational)

6) Photos of things that have helped you in your transition to college (note: may overlap with categories above).

7) Photos showing / representing some of the challenges you've experienced.

8) Photos showing / representing some of the challenges you've faced specifically in college.

9) Photos representing / showing more about your “life purpose” or “higher purpose” (i.e., not just college).

10) Any other photos you’d like to add that will help others understand you / your transition experience to college, so far.

You can of course take multiple photos and then select which ones to share later, and this may be a good approach if you are having problems finding “the perfect fit” for a particular category. You will also have the opportunity to show a few of these in our group session to your peers who are participating in this study, if you choose. This photo elicitation technique described above will help to guide and focus the individual semi-structured interviews (approximately 45 mins. each), and later our focus group session (up to 90 minutes).

APPENDIX E: POST-COMPLETION E-JOURNAL AND MEMBER CHECKING

E-Journal Writing Prompts-

1. Is there anything else you would like to share that you did not during the semi-structured interview or photo elicitation process, for any reason? (Tip: look back at the questions we discussed above, and the photos you selected for each)

2. What did you think of the photo sharing and interview process overall? Did it adequately represent your transition experience to higher education with CAMP? What more could be included?

Member Checking Communication-

Attached below you'll find my notes from our 1:1 interview and the Focus Group, as organized where possible by themes. Note that when I write about these as previously discussed, they will use pseudonyms (in place of your name) so you'll remain anonymous. ***If you do not like this pseudonym for your narrative and there is a particular pseudonym you would prefer to use, please let me know!***

Instructions:

1) Please click on the link below to find the attached two documents,
2) Then you can add comments to them in text or just reply to me here by email. Please especially note if there is (a) something that I missed or you would like to add, (b) something that is incorrect or just does not represent what you said correctly, or (c) that you would like to change.
3) Please also indicate the page number and specific phrase/sentence if by email, or reach out to me to discuss over an MS Teams appointment: Mark Lane-Holbert, mholbert@usf.edu.
4) ***If no changes or nothing to add, please just reply and say "NO CHANGES".***

*Other Notes: It's OK if it's something completely new or not seemingly related to a question. It is also OK if it's just something you forgot to say that feels important to add now. Also, if I didn't quite capture what you think I should have, or didn't actually report what you meant to say, I am happy to change it in the text.

Links to Documents: [individual documents link here]

Thank you again for your time and contributing to this study about your transition to college as a CAMP student!

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk and Authorization to Collect, Use and Share Your Information

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Title: Transition to Higher Education in a College Assistance Migrant Program: Students' Perception of Purpose

Study # _004875_____

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Mark R. Lane-Holbert, who is a Doctoral Candidate within the University of South Florida's College of Education: Educational Psychology program. This person is called the Principal Investigator (PI). He is being guided in this research by Dr. Tony Tan, College of Education professor at USF, faculty advisor and chair of the PI's doctoral committee. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at the University of South Florida, College of Education. The purpose of the study is to understand the first year transition to college experience of students currently in the College Assistance Migrant Program, and if self-identified life purpose plays a role in this transition. Student participants will take photos (or select photos they have already taken) showing various aspects of their everyday experiences and transition to college, and then share about them during an interview lasting about 45 minutes with the PI, and a longer focus group with about five students (lasting 90 minutes). In addition, students will be given an option to journal about their transition experience to college. The total time commitment is about 2.5 - 3 hours.

Subjects: You are being asked to take part because you are part of the College Assistance Migrant Program cohort of students, and you have valuable experiences to share about your first year experience. We would like to learn more about how students transition to college, to help future students in this program.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start.

Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will be compensated $25.00 for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Why are you being asked to take part?

Research in the past has shown that there are identifiable protective and vulnerable/risk factors which affect students from migrant farmworker families in particular, and their success in transition from high school to college. Specifically, we would like to learn more about how purpose and goal setting can help improve the transition experience, in such areas as self-efficacy, academic resilience and sense of connectedness in college. Your participation may help administrators and instructors working with students to better understand environmental factors affecting academic success, and increase awareness to help mitigate challenges that CAMP students face.

We are also interested in learning about successful strategies (things that work well) in this program, which in turn helps students to succeed and stay in college. We also hope to learn about your occupational/career goals, self-identified purpose for attending college, or larger "life purpose".

Study Procedures:

This qualitative research study will consist of; 1) a semi-structured 1:1 interview with the researcher, 2) a focus group (interview with five other CAMP students), and 3) photo elicitation, in which you take or select photos to represent your transition experience and discuss them as part of the interview and focus group above. In addition to these three main components, you are encouraged to participate in 4) "member checking", or reading my own analysis and citations from the study to check that they are accurate, and lastly, 5) you may choose to write about your experiences in an e-journal (optional), in order to share anything further not covered in the interview and focus group, or that you were for any reason not comfortable sharing beforehand. The time period of the study will approximately span two to three weeks, with an approximate time commitment of 2.5 - 3.0 hours. It may take longer depending on the amount of time it takes you to select photos, e-journal, and later check what I have written to make sure it accurately represents your ideas and selected photos.

Photo-Elicitation

If selected, you will have the option to take photos from a digital photograph device (smart phone, tablet, etc.), or provided with a disposable camera if you do not have one as needed.

You will be asked to take or select 10-20 photos which highlight something meaningful in your experience as a first semester student, based upon the prompts below. You will be asked to explain a bit about each photograph, and how this particular thing/place impacted your transition to college.

- The only photos of private spaces permitted are your own, not shared private spaces such as a shared bedroom or living space, due to issues of privacy and others not giving formal consent. When taking photos in public spaces (i.e., places where anyone can access; outdoors, classrooms, university commons), we also ask that you not include photos with identifiable faces of people, due again to the concern that they have not given consent to participate in the study. If there are identifiable faces of individuals in your photo who are not participants in the study, and you nonetheless share them in person or as part of your photo presentation, these would be left out of any future publication, or at least blurred to protect the identity of any individuals who did not provide consent.
- You can arrange them digitally on an app/device (such as computer or smart phone), simply print them, or make a photo collage. Access to a color printer and poster printer will be provided, should you choose to print them. You may of course take as many photos as you like on your phone/other device, but must narrow down your selection to 1-2 photos in each of the following areas, for your presentation/collage and for the purposes of sharing with the researcher and group:

1) Photos demonstrating your home or life period before coming to college (hometown, family, culture, etc.), perhaps what things influenced you most.
2) Photos highlighting values that are important to you, including those passed on from your family / community / friends / mentors.
3) Photos showing your first impressions of college, and/or the CAMP program.
4) Photos showing the goals you have for college (can also be places / objects that remind you of those goals, for example).
5) Photos of most frequented places on campus (i.e., most time spent, could be academic or living spaces or recreational)
6) Photos of things that have helped you in your transition to college (may overlap with categories above).
7) Photos showing / representing some of the challenges you've experienced.
8) Photos showing / representing some of the challenges you've faced specifically in college.
9) Photos representing / showing more about your "life purpose" or "higher purpose" (i.e., not just college).
10) Any other photos you'd like to add that will help others understand you / your transition experience to college, so far.

You can of course take multiple photos and then select which ones to share later, and this may be a good approach if you are having problems finding "the perfect fit" for a particular category. You will also have the opportunity to show a few of these in our group session to your peers who are participating in this study, if you choose. This photo elicitation technique described above will help to guide and focus the individual semi-structured interviews (approximately 45 mins. each), and later our focus group session (90 minutes), thus both activities will take place over two sessions totaling no more than three hours time commitment.

Interviews

A 45-minute interview will be conducted online or in person (depending on your preference) after submission of photos, for example using MS Teams or Zoom. Interviews will be digitally recorded, and transcripts produced from the audio recording.
You will be asked to share about your first year transition to college, and about your goals and "purpose" for your studies, and life purpose in more general terms.

Focus Group

Within one week of all individual 1:1 interview sessions being completed, a focus group session will be held lasting approximately 90 minutes with all approximately six participants and the PI, in person or via online video call meeting, contingent upon students' schedules. All participants will take part in this follow-up focus group to build upon ideas shared in the previous individual interviews, and hopefully uncover new shared themes together. You will again have the opportunity to share photos and see the photos of peers that they are willing to share.

In the group session, all students will have the opportunity to reflect and share with peers, including further display of selected photos on a device as PDF/slides or printed copy. All of us will share a space identified as appropriate and private on campus at the College of Education, or online via Microsoft Teams.

At the two above sessions, you will be asked to:

- Answer about 30-40 questions total, related to the photos you take or select.
- Share selected photos with the researcher (PI), and other student participants if you would like (optional, completely up to you how much or how little you share with the group).
- Reflect on your experience together with other current CAMP students, and possibly by writing an e-journal afterwards (not required, also optional).

Note: Interviews will be recorded and transcribed (written down) in an effort to better understand the themes and ideas you share. Your voice will not be used in presenting or sharing the data. Only myself (Mark R. Lane-Holbert, PI) will have access to the recording of the interviews, saved in a private password protected account. The audio recording will be maintained only long enough to transcribe the interview, probably 1-2 months. They will then be deleted from the USF OneDrive data storage system, and will no longer exist.

Total Number of Subjects

A total of six individuals will participate in the study at just this one site, at the College of Education Center for Migrant Studies, University of South Florida.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Benefits

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:

Processing your first year experience with peers, better understanding the concept of "purpose", including developing a sense of how you can better meet your goals and stay motivated in college.

Practicing photography as a means for explaining life experiences.

Risks or Discomfort

The following risks may occur:

- The risk of social emotional discomfort from sharing about your transition to college experience among a group of peers. This chance varies depending on each individual, and how comfortable one is sharing in a group of other CAMP students. You are never forced to share, and may choose which photos you've taken/selected to share, including none at all.

Compensation

You will be compensated ***$25.00*** in the form of a gift card, if you complete all the scheduled study visits (2). If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion, but have completed just one of the interviews, you will still be compensated the same amount, $25.00, in the form of an Amazon gift card.

Costs

There is no cost for participation in the study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There are no expected conflicts of interest that we could identify in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, this is a risk of this type of study in which multiple participants share information

verbally. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your data and records from the study. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, and faculty supervisor.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, and staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.
- Emergency personnel or mental health professionals: Per mandatory reporting laws, the researcher would be required to report any instances of a desire to harm oneself or others, i.e., suicidality, and in some cases abuse or neglect of minors.

Your identifiers might be removed from your private records or your samples. Your information or samples could be used and/or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional consent from you or your Legally Authorized Representative
We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

Data collected for this research will be stored at the College of Education, located at the University of South Florida in the United States.

The following information may be used and disclosed to others:

- Your photos, interview transcript and e-journal writing submissions (without your name or other identifiable information)

Your personal information collected for this research will be kept as long as it is needed to conduct this research. Once your participation in the research is over, your information will be stored in accordance with applicable policies and regulations. Your permission to use your personal data will not expire unless you withdraw it in writing. You may withdraw or take away your permission to use and disclose your information at any time. You do this by sending written notice to the Principal Investigator at the following address:

Mark R. Lane-Holbert, College of Education: Educational Psychology Program, Univ. of South Florida Tampa, FL 33620

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you, aside from the member checking process. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies.

If you have concerns about the use or storage of your personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind you to respect the privacy of your fellow subjects and not repeat what is said in the focus group or other dialogue about the study to others.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call ***Mark R. Lane-Holbert*** at Tel. 517-402-2293, or by email at mholbert@usf.edu. You can also contact the faculty advisor for the study, Dr. Tony Tan by email at tan@usf.edu. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

APPENDIX G: STUDY TIMELINE