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Joana Padilla Zapata
Mujeres Cultivando Raíces:
The Experience of Mexican Migrant
Farmworking Women and how they
Cope in Reaction to Stress

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the subjective experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women in the South Texas region. This study will provide an understanding of how stress of the migrant farmwork lifestyle affects Mexican migrant farmworking women.

Specifically, the line of inquiry is guided by one main research question: How do Mexican migrant farmworking women cope in reaction to stress? This study reviews a range of literature on migrant farmworkers and the significant stressors they are faced with.

Through their own narratives, 12 female Mexican migrant farmworkers from the South Texas region reveal how they are confronted with the complex stressors of their migrant journey and the coping strategies they employ in response to those stressors. This study provides some understanding of the strength and resiliency that migrant farmworking women have.

The findings of this research study portray various qualities that Mexican migrant farmworking women have and the resiliency that they possess should be acknowledged. These migrant women who work in the harvest fields reported minimal exposure to social workers, which may indicate that this population is underserved despite their struggles. It is essential for social workers to adhere to the principles of social justice and by gaining a better understanding of the lives of migrant farmworkers; social workers can advocate and provide better services to this population.

MUJERES CULTIVANDO RAICES:
THE EXPERIENCE OF MEXICAN MIGRANT FARMWORKING WOMEN
AND HOW THEY COPE IN REACTION TO STRESS

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2011

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I wish to thank my mother, who for sixteen years was a migrant farmworker. I have vivid memories of her waking up at dawn to prepare meals. Every summer, she would take us into the harvest fields where she worked beside my father until sunset. The work did not stop there, it continued into our home. My mother managed so many areas of our lives often sacrificing things for herself in order to provide for her family. She taught us what hard work was through her example and dedication both on and off the harvest fields. I admire her personal drive and I am proud because she stayed deeply rooted in the migrant farmworking community and because she has always worked as an advocate for migrant women. Thank you *ma'* for being an inspiration to me and many other migrant women.

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Dedication/ Dedicatoria

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, Esther y Refugio

Este tesis está dedicado a mis padres.

Papá le doy gracias a Dios porque siempre ha sido un hombre orgulloso de su familia y de su trabajo. Yo sé que el trabajo en el campo no es fácil y también sé que siempre lo hizo por nosotros, sus hijos. Lo hizo para sacarnos adelante y para que nosotros valoráramos la educación. Nunca se me olvida que andando en el fil usted nos decía que estudiáramos para no seguir ahí; una educación nadie no la puede quitar. Estas palabras siempre las llevo muy dentro de mi corazón. Gracias Papá por sacrificarse por nosotros. Estoy muy orgullosa de usted ¡Lo amo!

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Chapter I

Introduction

This exploratory qualitative study delves into the life experiences and coping strategies of Mexican migrant farmworking women in the South Texas region. Migrant farm workers are individuals who migrate from one place to another in order to earn a living by working in agriculture. Migrant farmworkers generally live in the southern states of the United States, and during the winter they migrate north before the planting or harvesting seasons (Hovey & Magaña, 2002). Research suggests there is an estimate of over four million farmworkers, most of whom are at risk for developing mental health problems and most of whom are Latino (Hiott, Grzywacz, Davis, Quandt, & Arcury, 2008). Knowing this specific population is at risk for developing mental health problems, it is important to find out how they are being welcomed in society and how communities are treating them. There is limited research about Mexican migrant farmworking women and how they cope in reaction to stress. This study will focus on how women cope when they are affected by stress of the migrant lifestyle.

In the midst of moving from one state to another, between two diverse cultures, Mexican migrant women may be faced with many challenges and uncertainties about jobs, living space, and travel. The interest of this study is to find ways in which migrant farmworking women sustain their well being in the midst of complicated and challenging journeys. Few have attempted to learn about migrant women's narratives, and this study will provide a rich, in-depth insight into the lives of migrant farmworking women. They share their own stories of their struggle and how they turned their struggle into strength.

This study will be limited to providing specific information pertaining only to Mexican migrant farmworking women. I will adapt the term migrant farmworker from Hovey and Magaña (2000) as referring to an individual who migrates from one place to another in order to earn a living by working in agriculture. The South Texas region referred to in this study is comprised of the area south of or beginning at San Antonio, Texas. The southern boundary is the Rio Grande River and the East boundary is the Gulf of Mexico. The women in this study considered the South Texas region as their home base, meaning they would return to Southern Texas after the harvest season in the northern states.

The harvest seasons in the northern states lasted approximately four months and they were referred to as *el norte* by the migrant farmworking women. In *el norte* is where these women harvested onions, chilies, and tomatoes. The proposed study explores migrant women's unique farmworking lifestyle; their narratives give a deep insight into their lives both on and off of the harvest fields. Readers will gain a better understanding of how stress affects their living environment and how they cope in reaction to that stress. Specifically, the line of inquiry is guided by one main research question: Which coping strategies do migrant farmworking women use in reaction to stress of their migrant lifestyle?

Most current literature about migrant farmworkers consists of migrant farmworker stress and implications for mental health; however, little information is known about their coping strategies in reaction to stress. In this study, some areas explored are migrant farmworkers and occupational stress, acculturative stress, Mexican cultural values, racism, and oppression. Hovey and Magaña (2002) suggest that Migrant farmworkers are socially marginal in part because they are physically isolated; in addition to being physically isolated, they experience discrimination and limited opportunities. Mexican migrant farmworkers can experience stressors such as

language barriers, difficult physical labor, and health consequences related to farmwork (Hovey, 2001). Findings from existing studies can be used in order to direct future research with the migrant population. This study will provide significant insight of the lives of Mexican migrant farmworking women in order for helping professions to develop interventions. Research within the migrant farmwork community will advance social worker's understanding of the needs of this community.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter will address current literature on migrant farmworkers, which will focus on this study's research question: How do Mexican migrant farmworking women cope in reaction to stress? The process of migrating from one location to another, along with other experiences tied to the lifestyle of Mexican migrant farmworkers brings about complex and multifaceted psychosocial effects that are significant and long lasting. This review will examine the literature on stress related to migrant farmworkers providing significant insight on previous data that has been gathered giving emphasis on the stressors that Mexican migrant farmworkers experience.

Migrant farmworkers in the United States

There are two different types of farmworkers: migrant farmworkers and seasonal farmworkers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services definition identifies a migrant as an individual whose principal employment is in agriculture on a seasonal basis, who has been employed within the last 24 months, and who establishes for the purpose of such employment a temporary abode (Cason, Snyder, & Jensen, 2004). The definition of seasonal farmworkers is defined by the same criteria but this population does not change residence, meaning they work in agriculture temporarily during specific seasons and maintain a permanent residence, which they return to daily. Migrant farmworkers, however, travel from one region or country to another to do agricultural work and who have the intention of returning home. Participants in this study were migrant farmworkers, which means that the women moved from one region to another and always returned home, which was Southern Texas.

According to the National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH), there are over 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States. These migrant farmworkers travel throughout the United States serving as the backbone for a multi-billion dollar agricultural industry. In 2009, NCFH reported that the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) has collected demographic information directly from migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States and it has been one of the most accurate sources for obtaining demographic information on this population. Moreover, it is difficult to collect information because migrant farmworkers are a highly mobile population. In the same report, NAWS states that 78% of all farmworkers were foreign born and 75% identified themselves as being from Mexico. Farmworkers in the United States are relatively young, with an average age of 33. Migrant farmworkers consists of 79% male and 21% female and 58% of farmworkers surveyed were married, with 51% being parents (NCFH, 2009).

As for language, 81% of farmworkers surveyed spoke Spanish and 18% spoke English with 44% saying they could not speak any English (NCFH, 2009). The median level of completed education was sixth grade or less, with 72% of farmworkers completing their education in Mexico. Overtime, the education of farmworkers who are foreign-born has increased. When looking at NCFH statistics for labor force, they published that 72% of all farmworkers expected to continue doing farmwork for more than five years and 42% of farmworkers said they did not believe they could obtain a job that was not farmwork. Labor contractors employed 21% of farmworkers, while growers and packing firms employed 79% of farmworkers. The percent of farmworkers were divided into the following: 34% worked in fruit and nut crops, 31% worked in vegetable crops, 18% worked in horticultural crops, 13% worked in field crops, and 4% reported working in miscellaneous crops.

Working in agriculture is ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations in the nation because of exposure to pesticides, dangerous equipment, heat stress, falls, and dehydration (NCFH, 2009). Moreover, these health risks are not the only risks that migrant farmworkers are exposed to. There can be significant psychological distress because their lifestyle demands them to move from one region to another, sometimes from Mexico (NCFH, 2009).

Migrant farmworkers and mental health

Acculturative stress may lead to poor mental health among migrant farmworkers, specifically to those migrant farmworkers who are immigrants because during the process of acculturating to a new country, immigrants may experience stressors such as separation from family which may lead to feelings of loss and a reduction in coping resources (Hovey & Magaña, 2002). Furthermore, the same study suggests that other stressors they may experience are discrimination, language difficulties, lack of social and financial resources, and feelings of not belonging in mainstream society. Given the above mentioned, it appears that immigrant migrant farmworkers are at psychological risk.

Alderete, Vega, Kolody, and Aguilar-Gaxiola (2000) researched the risk factors for psychiatric disorders among Mexican migrant farmworkers in California, in which both men and women were interviewed. They suggest that the lifetime rate of any psychiatric disorder was lower for women than for men and rates of alcohol dependence was nine times higher among men than among women. Migrant men and women had similar rates of mood disorders and anxiety disorders. The most prevalent disorder among women was agoraphobia and the most prevalent disorder among men was alcohol dependence. Results in Alderete et al. (2000) hold significant implications for evaluating and planning for mental health needs with this high-risk population. Alderete et al. (2000) suggest that special attention should be paid to facilitating

access to culturally appropriate mental health services and to planning interventions to address the social adjustment problems of migrant farmworkers and their children.

Migrant farmworkers may also be vulnerable to depression because Hispanic culture traditionally has collectivist values and when individuals and families lack the support from family and friends as they travel, they may be at higher risk for depression (Hovey, 2001). Research conducted by Hovey and Magaña (2000) implied that 38% of Mexican immigrant farmworkers had depression, which was a relatively high level among migrant farm workers. Furthermore, researchers also found that migrant farmworkers who are exposed to higher levels of acculturation, may lead to feelings of low self esteem, which can then lead to risk of elevated levels of anxiety and depression (Hovey & Magaña, 2000).

A participatory descriptive research study by Hiott et al. (2008) found that 38% of their participants had significant levels of stress as determined by the Migrant Farmworker Stress Inventory; the stressors in their lifestyle were associated with poor mental health among immigrant farmworkers. Hiott et al. (2008) imply that the mental health of this population is poor; nearly half of the participants had potential development for depression, while 18% reported levels of anxiety, which could impair functioning. Moreover, participants also reported significant levels of stress having to do with legality and logistics, social isolation, work conditions, family, and substance abuse by others. This research study, including the others mentioned above (Alderete et al., 2000; Hiott et al., 2008; Hovey & Magaña, 2000), document the poor mental health that is associated with a migrant farmworker lifestyle; findings suggest prevention and management of mental health disorders with this population is highly needed.

Acculturation and acculturative stress

Acculturation refers to contact between groups from different cultural backgrounds and it is most often studied as a process of adaptation in immigrants (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Acculturation is also defined as a cultural adjustment process where a person either adjusts or fails to adjust to customs, values, language, and ethnicity of the host country, while at the same time, trying to maintain their own cultural values (Martinez-Schallmoser, Tellen & MacMullen, 2003). The Hispanic population has been the largest group of immigrants to the United States, which in part could be why much of the research on acculturation has been conducted on this particular population (Schwartz and Zamboanga, 2008) . Furthermore, there has also been significant research on acculturative stress, which represents negative “side effects” of acculturation, including pressures to retain aspects of the heritage culture as well as pressures to acquire aspects of the receiving culture.

In 1990, Kerr and Ritchey conducted research to show how Spanish speaking and English speaking migrant farmworkers in the northern Illinois area were acculturated and how they perceived health status. In the same study, acculturation was measured by an index calculated from answers to four questions on language used and findings suggested that English speaking workers exhibited a significantly higher level of acculturation and the Spanish speaking sample demonstrated lower levels of acculturation. The migrant population is at risk because of the process of acculturation, effects of discrimination, exclusion, and acculturation stress (Finch, Frank, & Vega, 2004). Furthermore, the migrant farm working population has additional increased rates of social and economic discrimination as compared to the general United States immigrant population. Additionally, their findings showed that poorer English language skills and difficulty interacting with others may lead to a more marginalized employment; employment

where the nature of farm work includes pesticide risk, parasites, and tuberculosis. There are barriers to health care and an inability to communicate health problems to health services personnel (Finch et al., 2004). The environmental stressors, such as discrimination and hazardous working conditions pose significant risks to farmworker mental health. Furthermore, acculturative stress, lack of social supports, and poor family functioning are associated with greater symptoms of depression and anxiety among farmworkers (Hiott et al., 2008). Farmworkers who internalize acculturative changes as more stressful may be more susceptible to psychological problems such as depression and suicidal ideation. Also, an acculturative individual who does not have support and a pessimistic outlook toward the future may experience more anxiety than an acculturative individual who has an effective social support system (Hovey & Magaña, 2002).

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress may be a problem of particular magnitude of many employed women, specifically with migrant farmworkers because of health risks under certain work conditions. Swanson, Piotrkowski, Keita, and Becker (1997) defined occupational stressors as working conditions that overwhelm the adaptive capabilities and resources of workers, resulting in acute psychological, behavioral, or physical reactions. Hurrell and Murphy (as cited in Swanson et al., 1997) add to the definition by explaining that prolonged or chronic exposure to stressful working conditions may lead to illness or disease.

Because migrant families live and work in substandard environments, they are at greater risk for developing chronic and communicable disease. In 1995, Bechtel, Shepherd, and Rogers provided an assessment of health patterns among 225 migrant workers and their families using personal observations, unstructured interviews, and individual and state health records. They

found that children's immunizations were current, but dental caries were an epidemic. Among adults, almost one third tested positive for tuberculosis exposure. Urinary tract infections were the most common health problem among women. Primary and secondary prevention were almost nonexistent because funds for these services were not readily available (Bechtel et al., 1995)

Health practices among migrant farmworkers represent a challenge to health care providers due to the magnitude of environmental stressors that compromise the aggregate's economic and health care resources. Schneider (1986) (as cited in Bechtel, Shepherd & Rogers 1995) suggests that migrant farmwork is normally multigenerational, following a family history of working in the fields and often returning to the same locations each year. Dever (1991) (as cited in Bechtel, Shepherd & Rogers 1995) suggests that under the duress of poor housing, limited sanitation facilities, inadequate diet, and substandard health care, migrant farmworkers and their families are at greater risk for communicable and chronic health problems than the U.S. Populations.

An empirical quantitative study by Grzywacz et al. (2010) focused specifically on pesticide exposure; pesticides are an issue with immediate and long-term health consequences for migrant farmworkers and their families. Results from the same study indicated that the basic organization of farm work, or the way in which farm work is managed and performed, may shape farmworkers' exposure to pesticides. Moreover, results of the same study suggest that farmworkers who lack control over daily work tasks may be at particular risk for pesticide exposure when they are exposed to heavy physical demands or other hazardous conditions. Grzywacz et al. (2010) also found that interactions between indicators of physical job demand, such as physical exertion and hazardous conditions, and control were significantly associated with two dialkylphosphate (DAP) urinary pesticide metabolites. Moreover, results also provide a

compelling foundation for future research examining how characteristics of farm work may shape risk for pesticide exposure, as well as potential strategies for minimizing pesticide exposure (Grzywacz et al., 2010).

Another form of occupational stress for women can be learning how to balance employment with household responsibilities. According to Galanakis, Stalikas, Kallia, Karagianni, and Christine (2008), women who are employed and have household work and primary responsibilities of children, it may increase their feelings of daily stress. Galanakis et al. (2008) studied gender differences in occupational stress and they took marital status, age, and education into consideration. Results from their study suggest that women experience higher levels of occupational stress than men when gender differences are examined on their own. Higher stress levels reported by women could be related to the multiple roles that women are expected to play because many women have roles of being a wife, mother, employee, and a housekeeper (Galanakis et.al., 2008). Moreover, different roles that women have can lead to forms of strain, which could be lack of emotional support from partners, guilt because of high expectation in each role, and not enough social and family support. According to Greenglass (2002), it is important to also look at other stressors that add to occupational stress in Mexican migrant farmworkers because occupational stress is an important factor in understanding and treating women's health. Additionally, stressors relating to racial discrimination have been documented among Hispanic women.

Experience of racism and oppression

Mexican migrant farmworkers are challenged with racism and oppression including low wages, long work hours with few breaks, and threats to safety and health. Anecdotally, many agricultural employers exploit their workers through human rights injustices. According to

Steege, Baron, Davis, Torres-Kilgore, and Sweeney (2009), farm labor contractors often pay lower wages than farm owners hiring directly, and they may add illegal fees for rides, drinking water, lunches, and tools. In the same study, researchers imply contractors are engaged in the cycle of oppression with migrant workers by not abiding by the laws that are in place to protect migrant workers; many migrant farmworkers are either unaware of their rights or they do not seek protection of the laws. In *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Friere (1972) states, “However, the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so as long as they feel incapable of running risks it requires.” Some migrant workers, documented or undocumented, who are aware of their rights do not fight for them out of fear of retribution from the growers (Chavez, 1998).

In 2001, Contreras, Duran, and Gilje conducted a survey research project with migrant farmworkers in order to better understand issues facing migrant farmworkers in South Central Minnesota. Results in their study suggest that, despite federal and state labor laws, potential for abuse of the labor contractor system is high. Survey participants in Contreras and colleagues’ study reported crew leaders who frequently misrepresent jobs and benefits; they also pay workers late and take cuts of workers’ pay. In the same study, there were some cases in which participants reported that crew leaders still owed them money when they left the state; fewer than 5% of survey respondents reported that housing units in their camps were comfortable while others reported problems such as lack of private restrooms, lack of hot water, poor-quality drinking water, and extreme heat during the summer. Other problems mentioned by the participants in the study were lack of screens in windows and lack of accessible public telephones (Contreras et. al., 2001). Migrant farmworkers and their families also have restricted

access to health and human services because of their frequent relocation between states, language barriers, cultural barriers, and limited economic and political resources (Bechtel et al., 1995).

Migrant farmworkers may not only deal with racism and oppression from their contractors but from the larger community. In 1998, Perilla, Wilson, Wold, and Spencer conducted an empirical qualitative study with Latino migrant farm workers in the state of Georgia. In this particular study, Perrilla et al., (1998) held four focus groups composed of Latino men and women and one of the themes that emerged was social and community issues and it was the first time that migrant farmworkers in Georgia had the opportunity to lend their own voice regarding concerns and ideas about health and social conditions. In a focus group where social and community issues were brought up exclusively by women, they talked about the stressors in all areas of their lives brought about by their perception of prejudice and racism by the mainstream community, and participants talked about their experiences with discriminatory practices encountered in medical facilities, grocery stores, shopping centers, restaurants, school, and sometimes churches. Participants were only willing to access health services as a last resort because of discriminatory practices in the services at hospitals; they said these types of stressors affected their life physically and emotionally, in serious ways (Perilla et al., 1998). The following literature looks at cultural values that Mexican migrant farmworkers may have as protective factors.

Mexican Cultural Values

Among the Latino population, protective sociocultural factors include social support, strong family ties, and group identity (Alderete et al., 2000). Kerr and Ritchey (1990) suggest that the lifestyle practices among the Mexican American workers appeared to be strong in the areas of interpersonal support and self-actualization based on a study with sixty-two Mexican

American migrant farm workers. Additionally, this is an area of strength in the light of the widely recognized cultural importance; Mexican Americans subscribe to the family (Kerr & Ritchey, 1990). There has been significant research on family cohesion and *familismo* among Hispanic families. According to Marsiglia, Parsai, and Kulis (2009) the words *familismo* and family cohesion have been used interchangeably in studies with Hispanic families even though they are separate constructs. Familism or *familismo* refers to the sense of duty and responsibility toward one's family while cohesion has been described as the emotional bond that family members have with one another (Marsiglia et al.2009). Moreover, researchers found adolescents who live in families with a strong value of familism may be more inclined to respect and follow family rules; they seem to be receptive to their family's encouragement to behave well and to have a strong sense of duty to their families. Latin American backgrounds have often been described as possessing a collectivistic orientation, which emphasizes family members' responsibilities and obligations to one another (Fuligni, Tseng & Lam, 1999).

A research study was designed to examine attitudes toward family obligations among American adolescents with Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds. Researchers found that Asian and Latin American high school students possessed stronger values and greater expectations regarding their duty to assist, respect, and support their families compared to their peers with European backgrounds. Furthermore, findings suggest that even though Asian and Latin American adolescents live in a society that emphasized autonomy and independence, they retain their parents' familistic values and these values do not have a negative impact upon their development. In the United States, Latin American families often have been characterized as placing a greater importance upon family obligations and duties compared to families from a European background and a family obligation, for example, this might mean that children are

expected to spend time with grandparents, aunts, and uncles (Fuligni, Tseng & Lam, 1999). In the same study, researchers also mentioned that chores and duties also exist for children but these may be obligations among Asian and Latin American families.

In 2001, Trafimow and Finlay conducted an empirical study with undergraduate students at an American university; 47% participants were Anglo Americans and 56% Mexican Americans. Data provided supported researcher's hypothesis that members of individualist cultures perceive their personal characteristics as being particularly important verses members of a collectivist culture; they hypothesized that members of collectivist cultures perceive their group memberships as being important relative to members of individualist cultures (Trafimow & Finlay, 2001). In the same study, participants who self identified as Mexican Americans tended to emphasize the importance of group memberships more than Anglo Americans and being part of a collectivistic culture may indicate that the needs of the family usually have priority and that individual members are asked to overlook individual desires if they conflict with those of the larger family.

Summary

The preceding literature addressed a historical view of migrant farmworkers, acculturative stressors, psychological and health risks, as well as discrimination experienced by migrant farmworkers. The circumstances this population experiences includes significant risk factors. A limitation to the research studies mentioned above is the lack of the potential stressors of relocating. Bechtel et al. (1995) explained that migrant farmworkers and their families relocate in groups, having to drive day and night to move from one camp to another as crops ripen; this cycle repeats itself annually. Additionally, for children and families these conditions

interfere with the educational process and social development. This aspect of the migrant farmworkers lifestyle was missing in most of the literature mentioned above.

Most literature emphasizes how the lifestyle impacts a Mexican migrant farmworkers' mental health; very little literature focuses on their resilience and ways of coping. There is no significant research that has shown ways in which migrant farmworkers cope in reaction to stress. It is expected that Mexican migrant farmworkers will demonstrate elevated levels of stress; therefore they may develop higher levels of anxiety and depression. There is limited literature that discusses some of the strategies that Mexican migrant farmworkers need to sustain their well being in the midst of complicated and challenging journeys.

This research study examines the subjective experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women in the South Texas region and ways in which they cope in reaction to stress. In doing this study, I expect to contribute to the literature and expand our understanding of the resilience that Mexican migrant farmworking women have. We will gain a better understanding of the stressors that migrant women experience in the course of their lifestyle and we may gain knowledge of how they cope with those stressors. Special attention should be paid to facilitating access to culturally appropriate mental health services and to planning interventions to address the social adjustment problems of migrant farmworking women and their families. This study will provide social workers a greater understanding in their practices when working with a population that has been underrepresented in the literature.

Chapter III

Methodology

This qualitative study was designed to explore how Mexican migrant farmworking women cope in reaction to stress of their lifestyle. Specifically, the line of inquiry was guided by one main research question: What are the subjective experiences of Mexican Migrant Farmworkers: Understanding how they cope in reaction to stress. The primary questions asked were about the different types of coping skills that women use when they are under stress because of their migrant lifestyle. There is literature on the health risks, discriminations, and acculturative stressors experienced by migrant farmworkers. For clinicians who are new to the Mexican migrant farmwork population, however, there continues to be a gap in the literature regarding resilience and way of coping for Mexican migrant farmworking women. This chapter presents the methods of research used in this study and it will describe the sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Sample

The study was based on a focal sample of 12 female participants who self identified as Mexican women and who are migrant farmworkers. Study participants were limited to women who were 18 years of age or older, spoke either Spanish or English, and participants who were able to communicate their experiences verbally during the interview process. In addition, participants must have lived in the South Texas region and for the purpose of this study, the South Texas region is compromised of the area south of or beginning at San Antonio, Texas with

the southern boundary being the Rio Grande River and the east boundary being the Gulf of Mexico.

All participants considered the South Texas region as their home base. Participants returned home after the crop season was over in states North of Texas. The current age of the participants at the time of the interview ranged from 18 to 68 years. The least number of years that a participant had been a migrant farmworker was six years. The most was a lifetime, which was 48 years. This particular woman was a third generation migrant farmworker; her mother was harvesting onions a few months before she was born.

Forty-two percent of participants were married, 17% were widowed, 33% were single, and one participant was currently living with her significant other. Eight percent of the women had children and they all identified themselves as Catholic, the only constant similarity among the group. Sixty-seven percent of the women reported they only spoke Spanish, while the others spoke both Spanish and English fluently. All participants chose to complete the interviews in Spanish. The level of education was broken down as follows: 20% women did not have an education, 10% completed elementary, 50% completed middle school, 20% completed high school, and 1 young woman was currently taking college courses.

Recruitment

The participants for this exploratory study were recruited through direct contact from this researcher and through the snowball method. The following agencies gave permission to recruit participants: Eagle Pass Department of State Health Services-Women, Infants and Children, Texas Migrant Council-Eagle Pass Infant & Toddler Migrant Center, and Eagle Pass United Medical Center (see appendix F). Recruitment flyers containing inclusion criteria for the research project were distributed at these locations (see appendix D and D2).

The exclusion criteria were migrant farmworking men, migrant farmworkers who did not consider South Texas region as their home base, and women who were younger than 18 years.

One important exclusion criteria were women who were migrant farmworkers but not of Mexican descent.

Data Collection

Procedures to protect the rights and privacy of participants were outlined in a proposal of this study and presented to the Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College School for Social Work before data collection began. Approval of the project (Appendix G) assured that the study was in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and the Federal regulations for the Protection of Human Research Subjects. Data collection was gathered at mutually convenient and private locations. Data was collected in person through a structured interview, which lasted between 40-60 minutes and was free of distraction and assured confidentiality of the tape recorded conversations (see appendix E). The majority of interviews were conducted in a local library conference room. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, but all instruments were available in English as well. Three interviews were conducted via telephone because that is what was more convenient for the participants' schedules.

Prior to each interview, participants were given an informed consent form describing their participation in the study and their rights as participants. Participants signed the consent from before beginning the interviews. The participant and researcher each kept a signed copy of the informed consent document, and the researcher will keep these documents in a secured environment separate from the data for three years after the conclusion of the study as mandated by Federal regulations.

Participants also filled out a demographic questionnaire before the interview began. On the demographic questionnaire form, the women provided their age, relationship status, number of children, religion, educational level completed, and how long they had been migrant farmworkers. Two participants asked me to read and fill the demographics from because they were illiterate.

After the consent forms and the demographics questionnaire forms were filled out, the oral interview began. I prepared a list of interview questions and participants were given the opportunity to read the questions before sharing their experiences. Some participants shared their stories in a narrative form and others preferred to follow the questions or asked me to guide them through the interview. As the researcher learned more about the process of the interview, the order of the questions were moved around based on the interview. Each participant shaped the interview and the nature of the conversation through her responses and the researcher often reframed from asking certain questions based on what participants had already shared. The researcher also asked participants to clarify or to add more about what had been shared. The interview questions were designed to generate the women's accounts of their migrant farmworking lifestyle and the impact of their journeys.

In order to assure participant confidentiality, demographic information, researcher notes, transcripts, and audio tapes were kept separate from informed consent documents and are identified by number codes rather than names or other identifiable information. Any identifiable information was removed and disguised.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began after the interviews were conducted. The researcher transcribed all the interviews then analyzed for content. The descriptive characteristics of the populations were generated primarily from the demographic forms. The researcher used content and thematic analysis of the narratives and chose the themes that were salient in the participants' words. The themes from the women's narratives were examined and labeled using the most representative of the themes that emerged directly from the interview questions. More specifically, a spreadsheet was designed in order to code each question and to capture the relevant data according to topic and across participants; thus providing a visual representation of the data that allowed for easier identification of themes and patterns. After the questions were coded, the researcher quantified the codes in order to discuss frequency of responses. In addition, representative quotes directly from the interviews were used in order to illustrate the findings reported.

Chapter IV

Findings

The findings for this study are based on data derived from a demographic survey and semi-structured interview questions. Using fourteen research questions as a guide, I asked participants to share the story of their immigration processes. In some cases, I asked additional questions to clarify or build upon the participants' disclosures. The findings are organized according to the question and by thematic salience. Direct quotations will be used to present authenticity.

In an effort to uphold the intent of exploratory research and offer close representations of participants' perspectives, the findings focus on the significant themes across interviews and are reported primarily in the participants' own words. The fidelity and integrity of the translations is assured because this researcher is fluent in the Spanish language and has an intimate knowledge of Mexican culture.

Study Participant Demographics

Twelve women participated in the study. All participants considered the South Texas region their home base and they would return home after the crop season was over in states North of Texas. The current age of the participants at the time of the interview ranged from 18 to 68 years. The time that participants have been migrant farmworkers ranged from six years to a lifetime, which was 48 years for one participant.

Five participants were married, two widowed, four single, and one was currently living with her significant other. Eight percent of the women had children and they all identified

themselves as Catholic, the only constant similarity among the group. Sixty-seven percent of the women reported they only spoke Spanish, while the others spoke both Spanish and English fluently. All participants chose to complete the interviews in Spanish. The level of education was broken down as follows: 20% women did not have an education, 10% completed elementary, 50% completed middle school, 20% completed high school, and 1 young woman was currently taking college courses.

Reasons for Becoming Migrant Farmworkers

The initial interview questionnaire asked participants to share their reasons for becoming migrant farmworkers. Thirty-three percent of women were first generation migrant farmworkers, while 42% were second, and 25% were third generation migrant farmworkers. The reasons for becoming migrant farmworkers fell into three categories: women who were born into the lifestyle, women who were married into the lifestyle, and one woman who made the choice to become a migrant farmworker. Forty-two percent of women married men that had already been in the agricultural occupation and joined them on their migrant journey after they married and 42% of the others were born into it because their mother and father had already been doing migrant farmwork. There was only one woman who made a choice and her decision was influenced by the fact that she had only completed an elementary education. She said:

We became migrant farmworkers because we felt that we did not have another choice. This was the only one because it is the only place where they do not ask for any requirements to be able to work. In the field, they don't ask if you have an education or not...it was our only choice.

When asked if they had an option of becoming migrant farmworkers, 75% of participants stated that they did not have another option, while two stated that they did. Of the two that feel that they have a different option, one woman proudly stated she has worked as a bus monitor for a migrant head start center. One participant did not answer the question directly as she said, “This is my destiny.”

Experiences of Migrant Farmworking Women

Fifty percent of the participants shared their experiences as *dificil* or difficult while 42% described the migrant experience as both good and bad. Several women talked about their children and how difficult it is for their children to be exposed to working in the heat or to have their children moving from one school to another. One mother shared:

My experience has been difficult, I am always taking medication. My parents did not give me an education. If only my parents had thought of what I think now...we need to support our children in school that way they can see how much they are worth. It is for my children's own good, so that they do not suffer like I did. It is very sad. Sometimes we have migrant crew leaders who are good to us, others ridicule us. Why, because we do not have the education to defend ourselves. That is why I tell my daughter that the time that we stayed up North, it was not in vain. We did it so that she could graduate high school. It doesn't matter if I am sick...sick because of all the stress that I have, we sacrificed ourselves so that she could achieve. I still support my daughter because there is no better future than an education.

The younger participants gave the migrant student aspect. They shared their frustration with having to enroll in a school and months later, at a different school. One young woman shared:

This lifestyle is not easy because as a student and as a daughter of migrant workers, it was frustrating to be in one place and establish ourselves, then have to move to a different place to find work. We had to move to different schools and I have to say...it's, it's...no, no, I can't say that it is a bad experience, but it is frustrating. For sure in one year alone, we always moved two times, but it was usually three or four times.

Another young woman shared that her experience as a migrant farmworker serves as a reminder that she should learn to value what hard work is really like and to learn to appreciate her education more so that she can have a better future. While most of the young girls focused on their education, one focused on her social life. She shared:

I remember I never wanted to travel north as a teenager. I went because I had no choice, my parents would take me because I needed to help support my family. It was not easy for me because I was a teenager and I wanted to live my life as such...as a young girl who has a lot of girlfriends and I couldn't have this because I was working because I need to help support my family. It was not easy because I was a teenager, and to have to live that lifestyle...well it wasn't a lifestyle that a teenager should have. I wanted to live a normal life, like a young girl.

Positive Aspects of Being a Migrant Farmworker

Being a migrant farmworker is certainly not an easy occupation and year after year hundreds of women stand and bend for prolonged periods of time in extremes of heat to grow, harvest, and prepare the foods on our tables. When asked what the positive aspects of this lifestyle were, women had several different responses. There were equal amounts of responses among family unity (25%), opportunity to meet new people/new places (25%), and educational opportunities (25%). A younger participant said:

We travel with extended family. We are always together. Working in the fields is not easy but we have to make it fun at times. Turn the music up, play jokes, remember fun times together...family made work easier!

One woman shared:

The positive aspects of this job is that we get to meet people from different parts of the world...from other countries, countries that we have only heard of through television or radios, and you make new friendships, friendships that last and friends that you see over and over in the fields where we work. That is what I love, to meet new people.

A participant shared her school experiences:

I will have to say that school has been a positive aspect. I think that counselors and teachers at some schools that I have gone to pay closer attention to me because I am a migrant. Some of them know that it is difficult to be moving from school to school. Others don't know, but I think that counselors who know how difficult this is...I think they try to help more and they offer programs that help guide students. They help explain what road we should take in order to finish school. I felt supported.

One woman said that she was grateful for her job because she used to live in Mexico and in Mexico there was no job that offered her the finances that migrant farmwork does. She said:

I value my job as a migrant farmworker. In Mexico, I would have never made the amount of money that I make now because in Mexico, I can be a housemaid for only ten dollars....that's one hundred pesos. It is better to cherish the job that I have now. I don't sleep because I don't want to sleep in when it is time to go to work. I don't eat because I don't want to stop working because if I stop and eat...I will stop putting onions in my burlap sack. It is better to eat until I am in my home again.

A young woman shared:

Positive aspect, well, it was that I was able to help my mother and father with my work... because with my work, I was able to contribute to the family finances.

The women also were asked about their best experience they have had as a migrant farmworker. The highest percent at 33% said that being close to family has been one of the best experiences of this lifestyle. One mother said, "The best part it to be able to work along side your family." Another young woman said, "When I was a little girl, I remember always traveling with my mother, father, and my siblings. I will always have this memory present." Another 25% of participants stated that being able to contribute to family finances and to provide for their family was one of the best experiences they have had.

A mother shared:

Even though farmwork is not the job that I wanted, I have the satisfaction that I work to contribute....that I work to be able to pay this or pay that. I contribute to pay family bills with my work. I also can buy my children things that they ask for or things that they need. This is a good feeling. I contribute. Above all else, this has been a good thing.

Two women chose not to answer this question and one young woman said that meeting new people and new places was the best experience she has had. Another woman stated that *compañerismo* or fellowship in the harvest fields is what she likes the best. She is a woman who has traveled to the same state for many years. She has also struggled with dealing with stress and even though she says that field work is “so difficult,” she finds strength in it:

Work helps me deal with stress, believe it or not. I am there con *mis compañeros* (my co-workers), and even though we may not know each other, because every year new people join us, we still share conversations because we are *compañeros*. We talk and give each other encouragement. This helps me deal with my stress because at work, we talk to each other and we share our stories...and this makes time go by faster.

Just like this woman shared that *compañerismo* was the best experience, another woman shared something different. This 35 year old woman said that the best part of being a migrant farmworker is:

More than anything, I enjoy harvesting crops that many people eat. It feels good to know that I may have picked them. I go to the grocery store and say I could have picked the onions over there...those chilies, that cucumber. Very few of us actually take this physically challenging job on and it is very gratifying to go to the grocery store to see that the produce that I harvested is being sold.

Most Difficult Moments

Just as these strong women shared their best experiences, they also shared their worst. One young woman said that she could not think of a worst experience while all of the others mentioned either family separation or travel. Travel, by 58%, was what women reported as a worst experience. One woman named the loss of her spouse as her worst experience; this 68 year old woman has been a migrant farmworker “*toda mi vida*” or all of her life. She has six grown children and lost her husband several years ago. Her tone of voice softened as she shared:

My worst experience was when I lost my husband...oh, I felt like the world was closing in on me. I would say, what am I going to do, what am I going to do? I was only like this for a little bit and then I understood...if he had taken him away, if God had taken him away, he had taken him away for a reason, right? I had to move on because of my children...I had to move on because of them. And, well I give strength and everything to them. Migrant life was easier with my husband between the two of us, we would do it together. He would help me when the kids were young. I would make tortillas and he would cook the meal. If the children were asleep, he would get them up and help me bathe them. That was how we were able to make it...between the two of us. That is why when he left, I was like oh no. I felt like all of my strength was gone, but no, I am still here. I found strength in God. With God, I found it. I would cry often until one time, I don't know. I heard the windows and I saw him coning. I'll never forget him, and I have put it in the past. When I feel that I am struggling, I'll ask my husband to help me and help my children. I ask him to help me help my children. They are good children because they never leave my side.

Another woman said that the physical demands of farmwork was one of her worst experiences. It was off season and she was taking a break from farmwork. The following participant lives in Southern Texas for six months and lives in *el norte*/ the north for six months. As she spoke, her facial expressions accentuated the difficulty of her content:

When I am in the fields and it rains, when I am in the fields and I am full of mud, out in the cold...or when the heat is unbearable and I have to be there...that is the worst! This is one of the worst experiences because I want to be at home caring for my family and waiting for them to get home from school...I can't. I have to be in the fields tolerating the climate no matter what the weather is. Cold or unbearably hot...it doesn't matter. I have to be there. That is the worst; knowing that I am obligated to be there. I have to work late. Just when I think I can rest, I have to return to the fields again...another day, I never get rest.

Twenty percent of participants identified family separation as the worst experience. This 48 year old participant was daughter of the 68 year old woman mentioned above. She also reported being a migrant farmworker “since I was in my mother’s womb.” This woman had been through two different marriages and was currently living with her mother and significant other and her two youngest children. At one point, this woman stopped going *al norte* because she wanted to settle in her hometown of Eagle Pass, Texas, but this only lasted less than three years. Before she knew it, she was on the road again with her mother, three brothers, and their families. This woman shared her intimate story:

My worst experience was when I married and left my family for the first time. I would travel *al norte* with my mother and father and when I got married, I went to a different state. In Montana, well...things were not how I expected. My husband became abusive. My parents never did this to me. He would not allow me to work; I was to stay home. In the home we stayed at, there were more families. We were not the only ones living there. There were constant fights caused by jealousy because there were a lot of men in the home. It was a horrible experience. When I arrive from Montana, we separated and I went with my parents because I only felt protected with my mother and father. I was under their care once again. The following season, I traveled *al norte con mi familia*.

Another participant also said that family separation was the worst experience. She was one of the younger participants at 20 years old. She had graduated from high school and was the only participant that had ever been enrolled in a college courses. She sighed as she said:

The worst experience, well it probably has to be not being able to be close to *mi familia* (my family). I am not speaking of my mother or father but of *mis abuelitos* (grandparents), *tios* (uncles/aunts), *y mi casa* (my home). We relocate...a lot. We relocate from one place to another and we lose time, time that we could be spending with our extended family. We lose time with family because we have to work and with this type of work, we travel. I consider my home to be where we established ourselves, a place where I thought we were going to begin a new life. It has not been easy for us because we are from Mexico and we arrived to this country to begin a new life. We bought a home, enrolled at a school, and all of a sudden, there is change. We have to travel to a new place and begin again. It is not easy to have to begin again time after time. Only the bond that I have with my family has gotten me through these times because even though we have rough times, we have to continue pursuing. Knowing that my family supports me is what helps me pursue.

As mentioned above, 58 % of participants identified travel as one of their worst experiences. One young woman reported that they travel 16 hours to get to their destination. As a student, she also reported that enrolling in different schools was extremely difficult for her. One woman mentioned:

Travel is a burden because I have to leave my home behind and I always say please God help us return home. You never know what can go wrong on the road. We can stay stranded somewhere. We never know. Our life is not guaranteed. On the road, the only thing I can do is say God; we have a long journey ahead of us we need to make it there. I put us in God's hands. I ask God to make the time on the road go by fast and to make the roads shorter for us...I pray.

Another participant had a similar story. She said that traveling was stressful because of the many road accidents they witness as they travel. Her and her husband travel with precaution and she said:

That does not mean that others do travel with precaution. We travel during the night as much as we travel during the day and we are afraid of being in an accident. It is also a burden to travel with children; it is difficult for them to travel so much. Another difficult thing is their education because they go from school to school. Every school has their own way of educating students and it is very difficult from them to adjust.

One participant mentioned that traveling to different parts of the states was even more stressful because of the discrimination her and her family experienced. She said:

By traveling from state to state...we encounter people who discriminate against us because we are migrant farmworkers, because we work in agriculture. It is very apparent to me in grocery stores. It is hard not to notice how they treat us. Many times we have to go buy groceries after work otherwise, there is no other time ...we are in our work clothes. We have been working in the hot sun all day...we have mud, dirt, handkerchiefs, sombreros...people treat us different.

Most Difficult Aspects of Being a Migrant Farmworking Woman

While we were on the topic of talking about the most difficult moments, I asked about the most difficult aspect for a migrant farmworking woman. The most common response by 83% was that the most difficult aspect of being a migrant farmworker was the demand for physical labor on the job and family responsibilities in the home. Only two participants mentioned other aspects, which were from an adolescent perspective. Twenty-four year old participant had lived a migrant lifestyle for 11 years. As she reminisced, she shared:

The most difficult aspect of being a migrant woman has to be her family; caring for her family and not being able to spend time with her children. I think a migrant mother loses out on many things in life. As a young girl, I remember my mother didn't know what used to happen at school. My mother didn't have time to go, to attend to our needs, all of that. As a student, this was difficult for me because I saw that my classmate's mothers and fathers would go to school. My mother and father couldn't go...they were picking tomatoes and cucumbers.

Another young woman said, "I lose time. I have to wake up early and work late."

The 22 year old continued, "By then, I don't have time for anything...I don't have time for fun."

As mentioned above, 83% of participants said that a migrant woman never gets rest. Women mentioned the following chores after having a long day of physical strain: pack lunch for work, prepare dinner, do laundry, wash dishes, bathe children, and prepare children for school.

A couple of women mentioned:

For a woman, it is most difficult when we are out in the field and we are on our monthly menstrual cycle. We are expected to drag burlap sacks to our work area, pick burlap sacks full of onions and this is most difficult aspect for a woman. We are expected to work as if we were men in order to earn the same amount of money....a woman has to do this. Many times, men say that a woman is not as efficient as they are; that women don't do anything out in the fields. As women, we have to get up early to pack lunch for the day. After work, we have to do laundry and men say that this is our job...that we, women, are supposed to wash and prepare meals. But then there are men who are equal because I watched my father and mother. My father helped my mother in everything. He would wake up before dawn to cook breakfast for the morning break out at the fields. I compare him to the men of today...the women is the one that has to do everything nowadays.

Just as this woman expressed the most difficult aspect of being a migrant woman, so did the following participant. She talked about the importance of medical attention for women:

Our medical attention is the most difficult for us. As women, we have to get medical check-ups regularly. It is difficult to keep up with because we live in one town and all of a sudden, we have to move to another. It is so inconsistent. Another difficult aspect is that we have to work when we are on our monthly menstrual cycle...it is difficult! The majority of the time, we have to lean over for long periods of time. With cramps, headaches, needing to go to the restroom often, it is a difficult time but...I think of my family, my children...they are my most important motivation, I do this for them.

Stress of Travel

We know that a significant part of the migrant experience is being on the road. I asked participants what their traveling experiences were like. The second part of the question asked if traveling was stressful. Sixty-seven percent of women said that traveling was stressful for many different reasons. A forty-eight year old participant said:

Being on the road is tiring and stressful. Sometimes we don't have sufficient money in case of an emergency like our vehicle breaking down or not enough money for sufficient meals on the road...it is stressful. The plan is always to stop only when we need to like for pumping gasoline. It is more stressful when we stop in every town we drive through. We always travel together and we look like we are circus people (laughing). We all travel together...five families. It is always my three brothers, mi mother, and me and we all travel in our own vehicles. If one stops because his child needs to go to the restroom...we all have to stop. The times that I have had to travel on my own, I can get to my destination in 12-13 hours. When we travel together, we stop at an aunt's house to spend the night. We continue traveling the next morning and we stop to have breakfast in Amarillo. That takes a long time. I do my best to try to help my brother's out so that we do not have to make frequent stops so that we can get to our destination quicker.

For the women who did not feel like being on the road was stressful, they said:

It was difficult to get used to in the beginning. I wouldn't drive often, but when my husband was gone...I had to do all of the driving. I would tell myself, I can do this, I can do this. I have to be able to do this. The first thing I do before we get on the road is ask God to be with us and when we are on the road, I ask God to help us. I like to be on the road. Last year, my son called to tell me that my daughter in law had already given birth; they stayed here in Eagle Pass. My granddaughter and I went to be with them for one week. The trip didn't bother me. Being with my family is what motivates me to travel.

A young woman said:

It is a bit tiring but I like to be on the road. It's fun for me because I travel with my family and we get to see new places and meet new people. For my father...well, maybe the trips are stressful for him because he is the one who has to drive.

Community Resources

Participants were asked about community resource that they may use. Sixty-seven percent of the migrant farmworking women that were interviewed reported using government assistance programs such as the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children and food stamp benefits. One woman reported, "They do assist us *en el norte* but not here in our hometown." She continued, "Sometimes we get up north and it is stressful because we are low in money but an agency helps us pay the first month's rent."

Another woman shared:

In our hometown, sometimes they help me put new tires on my vehicle. When we travel north, a migrant recruiter will find us and help us. They take us basic needs...they cater to us and treat us very well. This is very helpful because sometimes we arrive and the harvesting of the crop has not begun yet. The basic needs that the migrant recruiter takes us will last us about one week. Another agency will give us a gasoline voucher so that we can use our vehicles to find temporary work with other contractors.

The following participant, mother of three children, said the opposite:

No, we don't use any community resources. I feel that because we are migrants, we do not get assistance. We have to figure it out. Every time we arrive in a new state, we have to figure it out. I feel like we do not have any kind of support...none.

Coping with Difficult Moments

Despite the many challenges that migrant farmworkers are faced with, they are incredibly resilient. There were four elements that participants identified as important in helping them get through difficult moments: self, *familia*/family, God, and a couple students mentioned counselors

at school. When asked who they consider as their support, 100% of participants mentioned family at one point or another. Fifty-one year old mother of five grown children stated:

My daughter helps me by giving me money and I also talk with God (crying). He is my support (pauses to cry). God carried a heavy cross, not us. In the mornings, I wake up before my husband and I go to church because I feel relaxed there. I get dressed and I go with my neighbor. It feels beautiful to praise God. I wake up in the morning and say my God, another day...another day. I find peace at church. Everything goes away there...all of my problems. I pray and I say I am in your hands...God give me strength. Give me strength. I feel good and happy at church. I tell my family to seek God, but they don't.

Twenty-four year old participant gave a different perspective:

My mother...she is my support. Sometimes I would cry because I didn't want to work anymore. I didn't want to be there and she would tell me that the season was almost over, that we would be home soon. Yes, I was young, I wanted to have fun. I wanted to be able to go out because up north, it's a life of imprisonment...without friends, without parties, without reunions, it was a dramatic change than from home. My older sister was also my support. We always talked on the telephone and she would tell me that everything would be okay, that it would be over soon. She would give me motivation to stay by my mother and father's side. She would motivate me by reminding me that it was only temporary.

Eighteen year old and 22 year old participants said that family was not the only support.

Both young women earned their high school diploma and they mentioned a teacher and a counselor as school support:

There was a teacher at school...Mrs. C, she always helped me. When I didn't understand something, she would notice and she would help me. At first, I was very embarrassed because my classmates would stare at me as if I didn't understand class work. They would stare at me and probably think what's wrong with her...but Mrs. C, she always told me that if I needed anything, I could go with her and with time...I felt more comfortable with her.

Another young girl, age 18, explained that she had to get used to the migrant lifestyle.

This participant mentioned that her mother and father support her, as well as counselors at school. She says being in new schools is overwhelming and she had counselors that helped her adapt. She shared, "Working in the fields has helped me realize to value education so that I can have a good job later in life."

Forty-eight year old participant said:

My two help me out a lot. When we are in the field and I feel like I can no longer work, they help me. One of them helps my mother out a lot. One works with my mom and the other works with me. My 17 year old daughter tells me, mom don't work. Go to the truck. I'll work. Sometimes my husband helps me. My family...I find support in them.

Several themes came up when participants talked about their motivation and the types of things they do to cope with stress. Women mentioned music, cooking, spending time with family, and a few young girls mentioned schoolwork. This woman said:

I like to cook for everybody. I cook buñuelos or chiles rellenos. I cook for them. I don't like to be sitting around. I only like to sit around when I'm in the fields (laughing). When I cook for everyone, it makes me feel better...I like to share with my family.

For some women music was a daily way of dealing with the stress that the migrant lifestyle brings to them. One woman said:

Any type of music works for me...it helps me relax. Everywhere I go, I love to have music on. When I get home for the fields, I still have to cook, wash dishes, you know...do domestic chores. Apart from that, if I need to do laundry, and if the apartment is messy...I need to clean. I get home extremely tired and you'll see me with my earphones..listening to music. My children tell me, *mama* you are tired, leave the dishes there. Go rest. I can't. I have to do the chores and music helps me relax a bit.

Another participant said that she enjoys knitting because this is a way for her to distract herself from the work life stress. She also loves to be creative and do artwork. Two younger women mentioned school work. One said she focused on her education as a way motivation and the other said that she would do homework as a way of coping with stress. She said she would get home from school and focus on schoolwork. After her schoolwork, she would call her friends back home. One woman said that counting down the days in which she would return home was how she stayed motivated:

It helps me to count down the days...I keep track of the days and months and this helps me. Three months and work was over up north. In the fields, I kept thinking that what I was harvesting, others were eating. This was motivating for me because with my hard work...with my hands, there was produce on people's tables. This is motivating.

There is no doubt that behind every meal we enjoy lies the dedicated work of a migrant farmworking woman.

Experience with Social Workers and Other Helping Professions

Unfortunately, migrant farmworking women had minimal exposure to social workers and other helping professions; 33% reported no exposure to helping professions. Women that spoke to this question said they would like for professionals to provide support for their children and their families. One woman mentioned:

I would like for professionals to speak to my daughters...to help them look at different options in life. I don't want it to always be about being in the fields, about labor, or about migrating from one town to the other. I want professionals to guide my children so they have more opportunities. Even for me...I didn't finish high school. I need to have a school education in order to have a different job. I have to work in the fields. I want them to help me....I want them to help me find different options.

The following mother of three children struggled to think about what she wanted to say. It was almost as if was choosing if she wanted professionals to help her or her children. She said:

More than anything, I want professionals to support my children because they are who carry the heaviest burden...we take them from one school and put them in another. Some schools are good, others aren't. I want my children to have all of the support they can get, I wish they can get more support in the school system. I suppose that professionals can help us also...they can help us with stress, maybe give us therapy, a class, or anything they could do to help us. Also, I wish that they could support institutions that help undocumented workers, maybe give farmworkers a work visa because this is everyone's dream...this is a dream that many farmworkers have.

This participant was one of the few to mention issues of legal status. Other participants focused on themselves. Fifty-one year old participant said:

Migrant women, we have similar struggles. I wish I could speak to a psychologist or someone so I can talk...because I know they are out there. I wish we could get support for migrant families because we have a lot of stress.

It is unfortunate that migrant women are aware that professionals exist, yet the professionals are not readily accessible to these migrant women. Migrant women also noted that it is important for professionals to understand and connect with them. “This is not an easy life, especially for a mother” a participant said as she explained that sometimes migrant women lose touch or the special connection with their husband and children because of the demands of their migrant farmworking life. One young woman gave the migrant student perspective and shared, “I wish they would understand us more...like if we need help in the classroom. I wish we had more support. Sometimes we struggle and I wish there were more programs to help us more.” Clearly, the life of a migrant student is difficult, sometimes they are the invisible students in the classroom and this particular young woman was asking for more programs accessible to migrant students. She was driven and proudly said, “This lifestyle is difficult but I know I can succeed...I have to put effort into my studies, pay attention in the classroom, and know what it is that I want to achieve. I want to be somebody in life... have a good future and be someone in life.”

It is important for professionals to have an interest in working with migrant farmworking women and their families because it is a community that is invisible, despite their importance to the everyday lives of the American people. Despite the challenges they face, these Mexican migrant women are incredibly resilient. The most salient findings in this chapter include the women’s endurance, love for family, faith in God, and belief in self as ways of coping during stressful times. Mexican migrant women celebrate culture and they strive to make a better life for their families. The categories presented in this chapter reflect the experiences farmworking women have had with the migrant lifestyle; their narratives revealed that their strength goes beyond physical strength. Their dedicated work goes beyond the harvest fields and into their homes. The implications of these findings will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

This exploratory qualitative research was designed to explore the experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women who consider the South Texas region as their home base. Specifically, the line of inquiry was guided by one main research question: Which coping strategies do migrant farmworking women use in reaction to stress of their migrant lifestyle? In this section, the key findings are presented and linked to previous research and literature. Implications of this study and contributions to the field of social work will also be discussed.

Major Findings

Major findings in this study indicate that Mexican migrant women who work in the harvest fields deal with complex stressors on a daily basis. Commonalities existed between the findings generated by Hiott et al. (2008) and findings that emerged from this existing study; both suggesting significant stress in the migrant farmworking population. Women reported occupational stress as the most difficult aspect of being a farmworker, which also was in consisten with Galanakis et al. (2008) research about women experiencing stress because of the multiple roles that women are expected to play. Participants particularly talked about the difficulties in balancing the demands of farmwork and responsibilities in the home. Most women are responsible for packing a lunch meal to eat at the harvest fields, as well as cooking meals at home, cleaning, laundry, and caring for their children. A finding that was not addressed in the literature is the stress migrant women experience when they are traveling from one region to

another. Participants shared their fear of being involved in an accident and not having enough money to pay gasoline or food for their families while they are traveling.

Another major finding was the bond that migrant farmworking women had with their families. This was consistent with Alderete et.al (2000) findings, which suggests that among the Latino population, protective sociocultural factors include strong family ties and group identity. The older participants, who were also mothers, talked about the physical demands of farmwork and the strength and motivation that they needed to finish the work; they said, “I do this for them,” which in Mexican culture is an expression used to convey that parents give their best effort to provide for their children’s well being. Several of the younger participants, who helped their parents in the harvest fields also said, “I do this for them.” There seemed to be strong family ties among the participants and their families, a concept that has been viewed in the literature as *familismo* (Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis,2009). Women also mentioned that fellowship with their coworkers as a way of coping with the stress of the physical demands of farmwork. One woman said, “Some days, we eat and take breaks together. This helps us get through the day.”

An interesting finding was the way that the woman expressed themselves. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to themselves as “we” instead of “I.” This finding was in concordance with what Fuligni et al. (1999) found about people from Latin American backgrounds; they possess a collectivistic orientation, which emphasizes family members’ responsibilities and obligations to one another. Trafimow and Finlay’s (2001) also found women expressed the importance of group memberships and have family as a priority. Additionally, Kerr & Ritchey (1990) also found that Mexican American families subscribe to the family; it is an area of strength in the light of the widely recognized cultural importance.

When it came to mental health, the literature in this study focused primarily on poor mental health of migrant farmworkers as opposed to what the focus was in this study. Literature suggests that migrant farmworkers may be vulnerable to depression, poor mental health, and higher levels of anxiety that may impair functioning (Hiott et al., 2008), and in this study very few women spoke about poor mental health. Although this wasn't asked directly, only one participant from my sample mentioned having anxiety and having medication for her anxiety. Once again, one of the main focuses in this study was about stress and coping with stress.

Finch, Frank, and Vega (2004) suggest the migrant population is at risk because of the process of acculturation. Although participants were not specifically asked about the cultural adjustments, they indirectly spoke about the process of acculturation. Throughout the interviews, participants disclosed they were immigrants; 75% of the participants were immigrants from Mexico. I hypothesized that the older women and the younger women would report language barriers, specifically with the school system. It could be that parents of school aged children might not have mentioned language barriers because of minimal exposure to their children's school. A younger participant mentioned that her parent's were not involved with the school because they were always harvesting produce. Another participant in the study mentioned that she and her family move up to three or four times in one year, an average of every three months. One interpretation of women not directly talking about acculturation is that migrant mothers work long hours in the harvest fields and they may have minimal connections to their children's teachers; therefore, they may not have to think about the acculturation process, at least in the educational setting. Migrant women spend the majority of their time in the fields with other migrant farmworkers. These women also live in migrant camps and travel with extended families who are also migrant farmworkers. Their life revolves around harvest fields, constant traveling

with extended family-who are also migrant farmworkers, and they look for resources within their community. Mexican migrant women may not experience a need to acculturate because they are profoundly connected within their community.

Findings from this particular study also suggest that migrant women experience racism and oppression and this is an area that was mentioned in previous literature. In Perilla et al. 1998 study, findings imply that migrant farmworkers experienced prejudice and racism by the mainstream community. A few participants mentioned that their experiences with discrimination, particularly in grocery stores and school systems. A migrant mother said that her children were not as accepted in certain school systems because they were “behind” in course material and it was because they often move from one school system to the next. This migrant mother expressed her concern and her desire to help her children, and she didn’t feel they were supported by certain schools. One participant also mentioned the discrimination from labor contractors, which is similar to the findings of Steege et al. (2009) found in 2009. Farm labor contractors are engaged in the cycle of oppression with migrant workers by not abiding by the laws that are in place to protect migrant workers; many migrant farmworkers are either unaware of their rights or they do not seek protection of the laws (Steege et al., 2009). A participant mentioned that sometimes contractors will not provide water or restrooms in the harvest fields; she said, “We don’t have a choice. We have to be there whether there are restrooms or not.”

Even though participants spoke about the complex stressors in their lives, they also spoke about their coping strategies in reaction to stress. The literature that was reviewed for this study mentioned Mexican migrant farmworkers’ stress and the implications for mental health, however, little information is known about their coping strategies in reaction to stress. Mexican migrant women who do farmwork have developed certain coping strategies in order to survive

and adapt to the stressful situations they experience. Findings from this study suggest that these women use individual strength, family support, and faith in God in accordance to their religion as ways to cope when they are under stress.

Although not included in the literature review, spirituality was a major finding in how Mexican migrant women cope in reaction to stress. Likewise, Ramirez, Lumadue, and Wooten (2007) found a positive correlation between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being are related in the Mexican-American Catholic population. The Mexican migrant women who participated in this study indicated that their faith in God and their relationship with God are interwoven with their daily lives; this serves as a foundation of strength in coping with their daily struggles as farmworking women. Women also mentioned music, knitting, creating hand crafts as a way of coping.

Social Work Implications

One of the goals of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women so that mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers can provide better services. The majority of the women in this study reported minimal contact with social workers and my hope is that with the findings gathered from my study, professionals will plan interventions that address the social adjustment problems of migrant farmworking women. More preventative treatment of mental health services that are culturally sensitive to migrant farmworking women is needed. Because findings suggest that this population is deeply connected within their community, a treatment modality that could be used is going into migrant farmworking campsites in order to establish support groups; going into their community would help foster and enhance their strengths and meet their needs. In order for social workers to provide more support for the migrant community, it would be helpful for them

to learn about the religious affiliations in the areas where migrant farmworkers are located because spirituality was a strength found in the women who participated in this study.

As social workers, we are required to adhere to principles of social justice and it is important that we serve the migrant farmworking community. Mexican migrant women who do farmwork experience stress in different areas of their life including discrimination and sometimes exploitation by labor contractors. It is essential for social workers and other helping professions working with migrant women be aware of the challenges they experience and how they can support the migrant community. Participants spoke of the importance of family relationships, relationships within their community, and importance of spirituality as key coping strategies when dealing with stress. Social workers can take these findings and use them to develop new treatment programs that will support and empower migrant families. Since these women value family, social workers can have conversations with migrant farmworking mothers about how family therapy can be beneficial to migrant families.

Special attention should be paid to facilitating access to culturally appropriate mental health services and to plan interventions that address the social adjustment problems of migrant farmworking women and their families. Findings from this study could be an opportunity for researchers to explore migrant farmworkers and their resiliency in more depth. This study can also be used to provide social workers a greater understanding in their practices when working with a population that has been underrepresented in the literature.

Future Research

This research study aimed to explore the life experiences and coping strategies of Mexican migrant farmworking women in the South Texas region, with the hope that it may lead future studies to research the resiliency of this population. Future research might benefit from a more broadened sample size and geographic location. It is important that future research studies interview migrant farmworking men as well as other migrant farmworkers from different cultural backgrounds. Research in those particular areas could be used to compare findings to this study in regard to how men and how other women from a different cultural background cope in reaction to stress of the migrant farmwork lifestyle. Moreover, findings from this study indicate the need for further research in the areas of resiliency among Mexican migrant farmworkers. More research on resiliency with Mexican migrant women is valuable because they are a population that has been underrepresented in the literature.

Strengths and Limitations

The participants in this study were all Mexican migrant farmworkers who considered their home base in the South Texas region; therefore, it is a limitation to be able to generalize to the larger population. The sample was a convenience sample and the recruitment occurred through snowball sampling. This sample allowed for valuable data, but it may not be generalized to other migrant farmworkers.

Another limitation to this study is the loss of essential richness of the women's native language. There might have been verbal expression that was lost in the translation. The translation is a limitation. Because the research study was conducted in the participants' native language; it was strength to this study. Another limitation that can be viewed as strength is the fact that I grew up as a migrant farmworker and I was affected by this topic as I faced many

challenges during my migrant journey. Although my identity as a former migrant farmworker could be a bias in this study, it can also be viewed as a strength because I am aware that all aspects of my study design and data are influenced by a Mexican cultural perspective.

Another limitation to this study relates to the geographic location in which the participants were from. All of the participants considered Southern Texas as their home base and the experience of other migrant farmworkers could greatly differ from living in other parts of the United States. A strength; however, is that focusing on Mexican migrant farmworking women in the South Texas region is of great relevance considering there is limited research on this specific population; future research can build on the present findings.

A strength of this study is that data that was collected reflected participants' authentic experience of being a Mexican migrant farmworking woman rather than using implications through survey responses that do not represent the participants' subjective experiences that are being expressed through their own stories. Allowing these women to express their own stories created a greater depth in our understanding of their migrant journey.

Conclusion

The Mexican migrant women who were interviewed in this study revealed compelling narratives of strength despite the challenges they are faced with on their migrant journey. Their stories provide an insight of the daily lives of migrant women who dedicate their lives to farmwork. It is time to honor Mexican migrant women whose hands are in touch with the earth, whose hands are in soil, whose hands maintain the food that nourishes our body. It is time to acknowledge the women who go unseen in the harvest fields; their strengths go unacknowledged as they remain an oppressed population. There is no doubt that Mexican migrant farmworking women are resilient women.

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Appendix A
Demographic Form

Name: _____

Age: _____

Relationship status: (Please circle one)

Single Married Divorced Separated Partnered Other _____

Do you have children? Yes No **If so, how many?** _____

Religion, if any: _____

Do you speak English fluently? Yes No

Do you speak Spanish fluently? Yes No

What educational level have you completed: (Please circle all that apply)

Elementary School Middle School High School Have taken college courses

How long have you been a migrant farmworker? _____

How many generations has your family done migrant farmwork? _____

Appendix A2

Datos Demográficos

Nombre: _____

Edad: _____

Es: (Favor de indicar uno)

Soltera Casada Divorciada Separada Viviendo con pareja Otra:_____

Tiene hijos? Si No **Cuantos?** _____

Religion,si acaso alguna: _____

¿Habla el Ingles con fluidez? Si No

¿Habla el Español con fluidez? Si No

Cuanta educación ha completado: (Favor de indicar uno)

Primaria Secundaria Preparatoria tomado cursos en la universidad

¿Cuanto tiempo a sido una migrante de agricultura?

¿Cuántas generaciones ha trababjado su familia en trabajo migrante?

Appendix B
Informed Consent

October 2010

Dear Potential Research Participant:

My name is Joana Padilla Zapata, and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, Massachusetts. I am conducting a study about Mexican migrant farmworking women's experiences and understanding how they cope in reaction to stress. I hope to learn more about the coping strategies and the impact that the lifestyle has. I will use this study to complete a master's thesis and possibly for other publications and presentations. It is important you know that I am NOT part or involved with any immigration agency or the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). Your involvement will consist of responding to a brief questionnaire that you return to me, as well as a spoken interview about your past and present experiences on your migrant lifestyle.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question, end, or withdraw from the interview during the interview, should you so wish. You have the right to withdraw from the study until April 1, 2010; your request will be honored and there will be no penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study, all the materials pertaining to your participation will be promptly destroyed. You may reach me directly. I include my contact information below.

YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION; THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS; AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

I thank you for your time, attention, and willingness to consider participation in the study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Joana Padilla Zapata
XXX-XXX-XXXX
jpadilla@smith.edu
Please keep a copy of this for your records.

Appendix B2

Forma De Consentimiento

Octubre 2010

Querida Participante:

Mi nombre es Joana Padilla Zapata, soy una estudiante de posgrado en trabajo social en la Universidad de Smith College School for Social Work, en el estado de Massachussets. Estoy realizando un proyecto con mujeres Mexicanas migrantes que trabajan en la agricultura. Espero aprender más de cómo reaccionan bajo el estrés y como este estilo de vida impacta sus vidas. Yo voy a usar este estudio para completar mi tesis de posgrado y quizá otras presentaciones. Es importante que usted sepa que yo NO soy parte o estoy involucrada con ninguna agencia de inmigración o el departamento de Servicios de Inmigración o Naturalización (INS), lo cuál quiere decir que yo seré la única persona que sepa quien es usted. Su involucramiento en este proyecto consiste en responder un breve cuestionario y una entrevista sobre su estilo de vida como migrante en la labor.

Su participación en este proyecto es voluntario y puede negar contestar cualquier pregunta, puede terminar o puede retirarse de la entrevista si gusta. Despues de la entrevista, Usted tiene el derecho de pedir que la saque del proyecto si asi lo desea. La fecha limitada para saqarla del proyecto es el 1 de abril del 2011. Su petición será aceptada sin ninguna pena. Si usted decide salirse del estudio, todos los materiales que se relacionen con su participación serán destruidos de inmediato. Usted me puede contactar directamente. Mi información personal esta incluida abajo.

SU FIRMA EN LA PARTE DE ABAJO INDICA QUE USTED A LEIDO Y ENTIENDE LA INFORMACION PRESENTADA EN ESTE DOCUMENTO, ASI COMO TAMBIEN QUE USTED HA TENIDO LA OPORTUNIDAD DE HACERME PREGUNTAS SOBRE EL PROYECTO, SUS DERECHOS COMO PARTICIPANTE, Y QUE USTED ESTA DE ACUERDO EN PARTICIPAR EN ESTE ESTUDIO.

Le doy gracias por su tiempo, atención y por considerar su participación para este proyecto.

Firma de Participante

Fecha

Firma de Investigadora

Fecha

Joana Padilla Zapata
XXX-XXX-XXXX
jpadilla@smith.edu

Por favor guarde una copia de este documento para sus archivos.

Appendix C
Referral Resources

Camino Real Mental Health

757 East Rio Grande Street

Eagle Pass, TX 78852

830-773-5696

Hours: Monday-Friday

8:00 am-5:00 pm

La Familia Counseling Center

2230 N Veterans Blvd #280

Eagle Pass, TX 78852

830-757-3335

Hours

Monday-Friday

9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Saturday

9:00 am-2:00 pm

Appendix C2

Lista De Recursos

Camino Real Mental Health

757 East Rio Grande Street

Eagle Pass, TX 78852

830-773-5696

Hours: Monday-Friday

8:00 am-5:00 pm

La Familia Counseling Center

2230 N Veterans Blvd #280

Eagle Pass, TX 78852

830-757-3335

Hours: Monday-Friday

9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Saturday

9:00 am-2:00 pm

Appendix D

Recruitment Poster

Are you a Mexican migrant woman who works in agriculture? Are you 18 years of age and older? Would you like to share your experience of being a migrant farmworker and contribute to a social work research project?

If so, I need your help!

If you, or someone you know, are interested in sharing your experience of being a migrant farmworker as part of a Master's thesis research project, please contact:

Joana Padilla Zapata
XXX-XXX-XXXX

jpadilla@smith.edu

All information will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, or want to learn more about this research project, please contact me.

Please take one.

Contact: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contact: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contact: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contact: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contact: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX
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Appendix D2

Poster Para Reclutamiento

¿Es usted una mujer Mexicana que trabaja en la agricultura como migrante?
¿Tiene 18 años de edad o mayor? ¿Le gustaría compartir sus experiencias de como es el estilo de vida de una mujer migrante que trabaja en agricultura y contribuir para un tesis en la disciplina de trabajo social?

¡Necisito su ayuda!

Si usted, o alguien que conoce, esta interesada en compartir sus experiencias y ayudar con este proyecto, por favor comuníquese conmigo:

Joana Padilla Zapata
XXX-XXX-XXXX
jpadilla@smith.edu

Toda informacion es confidencial. Si tiene alguna pregunta y quisiera aprender mas sobre este prouyecto, por favor, llámeme.

Favor de llevar información.

Contacto: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contacto: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contacto: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contacto: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX	Contacto: Joana Padilla Zapata XXX-XXX-XXXX
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Appendix E

Interview Guide

Could you please share your story with me and consider incorporating some of these areas as you talk about your experience as a Mexican migrant farmworking woman.

1. Tell me what the experience of being a Mexican woman who lives a migrant farmworking lifestyle has been for you.
2. What are the positive aspects of your life?
3. Why did you become a migrant farmworker and what other options did you have?
4. What is the best experience you have had as a migrant farmworker?
5. What is the worst experience you have had as a migrant farmworker?
6. What are the most difficult aspects of being a Mexican migrant farmworking woman?
7. What is your family history of being a migrant farmworker?
8. Tell me about your traveling experiences. Has traveling been stressful for you? If so, how do you cope with that stress?
9. Do you use community resources? If, so, which ones?
10. How do you handle the difficulties? Tell me about your support.
11. Who in your life do you consider your support?
12. Tell me about the types of things you do to keep yourself motivated?
13. What daily things do you do to cope with stress?
14. What would you like for social workers/therapists to know about your experience in order to help Mexican women who live a migrant farmworking lifestyle?

Appendix E2

Guia Para La Entrevista

¿Me podría compartir su historia de que ha sido su experiencia de trabajar como migrante en la agricultura?

1. Dígame, que ha sido su experiencia de ser una mujer que vive este estilo de vida.
2. ¿Que son los aspectos positivos de su vida como migrante?
3. ¿Por qué decidió ser una migrante y trabajar en el campo y que otras opciones tubo?
4. ¿Qué ha sido la mejor experiencia que ha tenido como migrante?
5. ¿Qué ha sido la peor experiencia que ha tenido como migrante?
6. ¿Para una mujer, qué son los aspectos más difíciles de este estilo de vida?
7. ¿Qué es la historia familiar de ser trabajadores migrantes?
8. Dígame de sus experiencias de viajes. ¿Es estresante el viajar? ¿Si lo es, como lidea con ese estrés?
9. ¿Usa programas de recursos para ayudarle? Si los usa, qué programas de recursos usa?
10. ¿Cómo supera las dificultades? Cuénteme de quien o que le brinda apoyo.
11. ¿Quién es su vida considera como apoyo?
12. Cuénteme qué tipo de cosas hace para mantenerse motivada.
13. ¿Qué cosas hace diariamente para lidiar con el estrés de este estilo de vida?
14. Para que terapeutas/psicólogos comprendieran mejor a otras mujeres con experiencias similares ¿Que le gustaría que ellos supieran acerca de su experiencia?

Appendix F

Agency Letter

Joana Padilla Zapata

March 11, 2011

Agency:

I am conducting a study of Mexican migrant farmworking women and I am interested in working with your agency to identify potential participants. I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. This research will be the basis for my Master's thesis.

The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women and how they cope in reaction to stress. The research design and potential risks and benefits to participants will be closely reviewed and monitored by myself and the Smith College faculty. My research methods will also be available for review by your agency.

Participants will be asked questions about their lives as migrant workers and what their experiences have been as they travel to different regions. The identity of participants will remain strictly confidential. Cooperation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at anytime until April 1, 2011. Participants will receive no financial or personal benefits other than a list of community resources for mental health treatment.

The focus of my research grew out of my experience with working migrant women and their families, and also, from having experienced a migrant lifestyle myself. The goal of my study is to understand the experiences of Mexican migrant farmworking women so that mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers can gain a better understanding of migrant women and so they can provide better services to this population. My hope is that with the information gathered for my project, professionals will better plan interventions that address the social adjustment problems of migrant farmworking women.

I will be happy to provide more information on my research design and method. Thank you for your assistance with this study. I look forward to discussing my project with you. I can be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at jpadilla@smith.edu.

Thank you,

Joana Padilla Zapata

Appendix G

Human Subject Review Board Approval



Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

March 11, 2011

Joana Padilla Zapata

Dear Joana,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and all is in order. Your Consent is direct and to the point. The Consent is so important as it really is the agreement between the researcher and the participant and must be clear, easy to understand, and complete. We are happy to give final approval to your very interesting and useful study.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ann Hartman'.

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Colette Duciaume-Wright, Research Advisor

Table 1. Personal Characteristics of Mexican Migrant Farmworking Women Study Participants, South Texas Region, 2011 (N=12)

Personal Characteristics	N	%
Age group		
Less than 25 years	5	42
25-35 years	1	8
35 years and older	6	50
Marital status		
Single	4	33
Married	5	42
Partner	1	8
Separated	0	0
Widowed	2	17
Divorced	0	0
Number of children		
None	4	33
1	1	8
2	0	0
3	3	25
4 or more	4	33
Religion		
Catholic	12	100
Language		
Speak Spanish fluently	12	100
Speak English fluently	6	50
Education		
Did not complete elementary	2	17
Completed elementary	1	8
Completed middle school	8	67
Completed high school	0	0
Have taken college courses	1	8
Years in migrant farmwork		
1-5 years	0	0
6-9 years	5	42
10-19 years	5	42
>20 years	2	17