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Hear My Voice and the Voices of Those I Teach: A Phenomenological Perspective of Experiences From Migrant Education Program Teachers

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Teachers

by
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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

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Ingrid Bynes

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Name

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Date

Acknowledgements

"Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert." – Isaiah 43:19

God is faithful! First and foremost, I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for being the source of my strength, joy, and life. With Him, all things are possible. I have learned so much about myself, God's unconditional love, and His immense desire to reveal our destiny and ultimate purpose in the world. It is because of my personal relationship and covenant with Him that I will continue to seek, explore, and learn new things that further cultivate my personal mission of helping others. My heart is full of gratitude and hope because I now know where I fit in His kingdom and plan.

To my daughter, Jada, I want you to know how blessed I am to have you in my life. There is no doubt in my mind that God sent me you to learn as much as to teach. You have been my biggest cheerleader, motivation, and support. Each time I felt discouraged, your words of encouragement were always so timely and full of wisdom. It is so ironic how someone in their "single digits" can store such greatness and profound thoughts of inspiration. You are a gift, and I pray the legacy that I am striving to leave for you allows you to blossom, to bloom, and to spread goodness to all you encounter and reach. You are a radiant spirit. You, my dear, are loved!

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To my professors, I absolutely admire, honor, and respect you, your work, and your diligence to serving the students of Nova Southeastern University. You are greatness and your presence emboldens us to be the same. May God bless and keep each one of you in His care!

Abstract

Hear My Voice and the Voices of Those I Teach: A Phenomenological Perspective of Experiences From Migrant Education Program Teachers. Bynes, Ingrid, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: migrant education, teachers, standpoint theory, critical race theory, culturally-relevant pedagogy, culturally-sustaining pedagogy

In the United States, there is an increasing need for educators to acknowledge and utilize culturally-relevant pedagogy within their classrooms. Many MEP educators in public schools, particularly those working in secondary education, find it challenging to ensure this disadvantaged and, often invisible, population is served in a consistent and productive manner. In fact, one indication highlighted in the literature is the lack of research on the perspective of educators in the secondary MEP classroom setting. Consequently, a study was conducted with this group of teachers to gain insight regarding their view of teaching Hispanic migrant students in a large rural high school.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role of perceptions and personal experiences of Migrant Education Program teachers in a large rural high school located in the southeastern United States. The study was guided by two central research questions. After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), data was collected from seven MEP educators who had at least three years of experience in a participative leadership position. Data was collected through semistructured teacher interviews. All participants were interviewed individually one time within the same semester for 60 minutes. The researcher recorded the interviews with each participant's permission. After the interviews were completed, the researcher allowed participant teachers to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy. During this process, the researcher analyzed the perspectives of culturally-relevant pedagogy according to the MEP educators.

The findings of the study revealed most migrant teachers working in the MEP believe the MEP is efficient in meeting the needs of migrant youth in the classroom. However, the study uncovered despite the MEP teachers' efforts of supporting students academically and often producing successful outcomes towards graduation, MEP teachers felt limited in their ability to resolve many of the population's socioeconomic and social mobility issues. This study also presented the challenges and benefits MEP teachers experience in a rural secondary school setting. Due to the lack of knowledge, awareness, and value on the role of the MEP, teachers in the MEP are often misunderstood, undervalued, and underappreciated for their efforts and placement in the academic setting. Nevertheless, the study indicated the immense responsibility and undeniable impact MEP teachers successfully cultivate in their school's culture, through MEP students and families and the surrounding community. As a result, the role and experiences of the MEP teachers are challenging, multifaceted, and holistic in nature. The recommendations provided in this study called for (a) more equity and inclusion of the MEP teacher in the secondary school setting, (b) a stronger presence, acknowledgement, and acceptance of cultural pedagogy in the MEP, as well as (c) an enhanced role and presence of MEP teachers in leadership roles to further advance and reinforce the vision, mission, and purpose of the MEP.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The migration of Hispanics within the United States grew exponentially between 2000 to 2014, and it comprised more than 54% of the nation's population growth trend (Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends, 2016). In the United States' educational system, immigration is the main component responsible for the shift in student demographics in PK-12 schools, which has led to 10% of students in the United States identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Nevertheless, this population still demonstrates a decreased level of progression in academic achievement (Sharkey, 2018). Due to this measure of growth and the growing academic concerns of this diverse population, policies and regulations that address the educational needs of Hispanic migrant students have been reviewed to ensure existing and newly proposed legislation will maintain equal rights, protection, and access to public education (Parsi & Losh, 2016). Nonetheless, Crosnoe and Turley (2011) indicate that factors such as the increased need for students to obtain postsecondary education to gain adequate economic benefits and the broadening of the white-Hispanic gap in educational outcomes, have far-reaching socioeconomic consequences for children of immigrant groups.

If, indeed, migrant students are to reach these postsecondary outcomes, it is imperative that highly qualified educators are readily accessible to this student population, possess a keen understanding of Latina/o student values, attitudes, and behavior, as well as remain consistently devoted to promoting awareness and support for multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion (Cate & Russ-Eft, 2018). Currently, within the K-12 public educational system, there is still a lack of Latina/o representation in

leadership roles; the vast majority of public school teachers and principals are white, with only 7.8% of Latina/o teachers and 6.8% of Latina/o principals in the United States present during the 2011-2012 academic school year (Rodriguez, Martinez, & Valle, 2016). Although representation has been scarce in public school administration and the traditional classroom, there is one program that remains to serve the migrant education student and community quite readily: the Migrant Education Program, or MEP. The MEP has acknowledged the migrant educator as the most resourceful party responsible for ensuring graduation requirements are met for MEP students (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Furthermore, Bonner et al. (2011) assert the professional teaching community would be enhanced by providing more bilingual teachers of Latino descent to serve and deliver language and instructional practices that produce a supportive, equitable, and productive learning environment for this growing student population. Yet, the plight and true role of migrant educators is still often misunderstood or unacknowledged by non-MEP teachers. Consequently, migrant students often face discriminatory actions in the classroom setting based on a variety of stereotypes, generalizations, and assumptions (Free et al., 2014).

Along with discriminatory occurrences in the classroom setting, migrant students are often faced with a variety of obstacles outside of school that may prevent their ability to successfully graduate. Romanowski (2003) credits the increased social mobility of migrant students as the cause of decreased educational achievement. Additionally, Free et al. (2014) indicate that hardships associated with the experience faced by the migrant youth are influential to a student's learning development and academic outcomes; thereby, high school completion for migrant students can greatly reduce poverty and increase postsecondary success. MEP teachers must solve dilemmas that hinder their

students in their academic and personal lives. In fact, the MEP program is founded on the Seven Areas of Concern (OME, 2016) which address: a) school engagement, b) English language development, c) educational support, d) instructional time, e) educational continuity, f) educational support in the home, and g) health. These components act as themes for MEP personnel to consider in an ongoing effort to provide, promote, and prepare students for professional and productive futures. However, there are many other factors that must be considered by migrant educators regarding their students. These issues mainly include the stigmatization and invalidation experienced by teachers and students alike, as well as the lack of parental knowledge and support due to sociocultural differences, and economic hardships experienced in the community (Vocke, 2007). Viloria (2017) highlights an example of this through the lens of Mexican American teachers who work with Mexican American students that progressively and positively are equipped "…to recognize and address racial tensions, discriminations, and resegregation…" in their educational setting (p. 3).

Ironically, migrant teacher advocates often share a similar form of stigmatization within their school organizations and even their teacher training programs. These educators often "…believe their voices to be unheard, their concerns unheeded" as they prepare, begin, and continue their educational careers with this underserved population (Delpit, 2006, p. 107). Due to this common sentiment felt by teachers of migrant classrooms, it is important to note they serve as the primary advocates and facilitators that will educate students not only about curriculum needs, but sociocultural biases and assumptions that often serve to hinder migrant children from obtaining successful academic outcomes. Furthermore, meaningful dialogue may be able to occur in

preservice teacher programs to raise awareness of the cultural and generational diversity that is now predominantly present within American classrooms (Viloria, 2017).

Phenomenon of interest. Teachers and related personnel, particularly MEP advocate educators, value migrant youth for their resilience and share a connection with their student populations by exhibiting dual roles in the school and community (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). Through the persistent and dedicated work of MEP educators, students are often recognized, acknowledged, and celebrated for their progression while enduring challenges related to lived experiences of the migrant lifestyle.

Furthermore, by valuing the strengths afforded to this population, negative stereotypes and beliefs towards people of color, [particularly migrant students], that often help to manifest adverse attitudes and assumptions can be eradicated (Solórzano, 1997). Graff et al. (2013) declare that migrant seasonal farmworkers are academically resilient because their success is "…manifested through [their] personal drive, a strong internal locus of control, and experiences that strengthened their resolve" (p. 342). Furthermore, migrant students are able to overcome many of these social barriers and obtain academic success by being exposed to quality programs, dedicated educators and peers, and sound advice they use to navigate through their academic experience (Graff et al., 2013). Equally important, advocates that are in close contact with this population are able to gain more insight about their personal values, beliefs, and attitudes. Through the utilization of culturally responsive teaching, the classroom teacher can become an integral component of the curriculum and give a voice to the lesson they teach through their own perspective and human experience (Gay, 2013). In turn, MEP teacher advocates will ultimately become more self-aware of their thoughts and influence on

others. Not only does this foster reflection and metacognition for the educator, but personal growth in several other areas as well.

Background and justification. Based on the Office of Migrant Education (OME), the Migrant Education Program (MEP) has been developed to initiate, implement, and execute the following objectives (OME, Title I, Part C):

> Funds support high quality education programs for migratory children and help ensure that migratory children who move among the states are not penalized in any manner by disparities among states in curriculum, graduation requirements, or state academic content and student academic achievement standards. Funds also ensure that migratory children not only are provided with appropriate education services (including supportive services) that address their special needs but also that such children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet. Federal funds are allocated by formula to SEAs, based on each state's per pupil expenditure for education and counts of eligible migratory children, age 3 through 21, residing within the state. (p. 1)

As a result, in 2007, revisions to the previous No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, also known as Every Student Succeeds Act and the Race to the Top initiative, provided school migrant educators with more resources to close the achievement gap, enhance teacher-led interventions for the bottom quartile of students in school, and provide equal opportunity for postsecondary education (USDOE, 2016). However, these funds are only allocated to highly qualified, state-certified teachers under Title I, Part A, which allows for educators in traditional classrooms to receive needed resources and professional

development. These funds do not cover migrant advocates who work solely under the MEP initiative, which is notably Title I, Part C. Therefore, MEP personnel are often unable to acquire resources and attend professional development as readily as traditional educators. Issues such as these can often prove to be problematic for the MEP teacher. Their role as a specialized instructor requires them to confront colossal issues, including the implementation of subject area content, foundational English language skills, and required state and national standards (Vocke, 2007).

For this reason, the Office of Migrant Education, or OME, is the entity which allows for the allocation of funds within 49 states for migrant youth (OME, 2016). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 guaranteed to serve disadvantaged youth by contributing to school districts and SEAs throughout the United States. Initiatives such as federal grants, scholarships, and other sources of funding were prompted to eliminate the achievement gap and promote equality in the public school system (OME, 2016). Furthermore, in 1966, the Act added the MEP as an initiative to enhance the quality and access to instruction for children from migrant farmworker families who dealt with ongoing mobility issues and educational interruption (NASDME, 2016). As a result, MEP educators have been charged with the duty to ensure children who are vulnerable to educational inequities receive a consistent and quality education.

In fact, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2016b) indicates that one out of four students in America lives in poverty. A statistic such as this indicates the imperative need for migrant teachers to promote education to those in need of their assistance. Furthermore, lack of education and social mobility serves as the major reasons for students settling to adopt their parents' choice of migrant farm work as a

source of income and livelihood (Romanowski, 2003). Teachers must utilize best

practices that will target the critical pedagogical needs that acknowledge their students'

cultural identities, distinct beliefs, and nuances (Gay, 2010).

Setting of the study. According to the school's findings, the rural high school

featured in this study has an approximate enrollment of 2600 students with the following

demographic data analysis: 52.4% Hispanic, 23.5% White, 16.8% Black, 5.2%

Multiracial, 1.8% Asian, and .30% Indian (Hillsborough County Schools, 2017). Within

the site's student population, the percentage of students eligible for the program that

offers free or reduced-amount lunch is approximately 72% (Hillsborough County

Schools, 2017). Although it is challenging to retrieve a true representation of migrant

students at a glimpse due to mobility issues and small sample sizes, the MEP is

responsible for meeting target issues highlighted by the state.

In the 2015-2016 school year, the following findings regarding migrant student

graduation rates were disclosed: 71.9% of senior migrant students graduated with a

standard diploma, 12.4% graduated with a special diploma or left with a certificate of

completion, and 15.7% were promoted, retained, or withdrew (Hillsborough County,

2017). Upon first glance, these statistics may be perceived as sufficiently sound;

however, the figures indicate roughly 27% of migrant students within the study withdrew

from school or obtained a special diploma. Approximately one quarter of this population

is left with minimal opportunities for academic and career advancement.

The 2013-2014 school year findings indicated the difference in graduation rate for

migrant students versus those of their non-migrant peers: specifically, with migrant

students at 59.3% and non-migrant students at 69.0% (Hillsborough County Schools,

2017). The achievement gap between the two student groups drastically affects migrant students and is one of the major issues MEP educators seek to address each year. Therefore, it is essential for migrant educators to provide a caring and culturally sensitive atmosphere for students while aligning with non-MEP teachers in order to bring forth monumental learning change (Valenzuela & Rubio, 1999). Moreover, Gay (2010) endorses four attributes of caring found in a culturally responsive classroom:

- Caring is shown through nurturing a person's progression in performance and personal needs.

- Care is demonstrated by intentionally prompting those who are served to action.

- Care demands increased student effort and achievement.

- Caring is multidimensionally responsive; in other words, it takes commitment, competence, confidence, content, and cultural pluralism (pgs. 53-58).

Migrant educators and advocates within the United States are required to participate in professional development activities to improve skills associated with increased levels of student performance. Additionally, many have received recommendations to collaborate with all school-based auxiliary boards to improve student achievement for MEP students. These objectives have been set as an effort to enhance MEP students' ability to gain a 2.0 GPA, which is the minimum grade point average for graduation purposes.

During the 2015-2016 school year, graduation rates for high school migrant students decreased by 5.2 percentage points from the 2014-2015 school year, and Priority for Services (PFS) students dropped 14.2 percentage points (Hillsborough County, 2017).

The decline in successful outcomes for migrant students was directly reflected in findings from previous years. Notably, the 2013-2014 academic school year indicated the proposed goal for secondary migrant students to receive the minimum 2.0 was set at 80% but yet, the resulting percentage met was 76% for the year. Based on the 79% achievement results from the 2012-2013 school year, the program experienced a reduction of 3% in its success rate for secondary migrant students with a 2.0 GPA. Consequently, strategies and resources that promote the retention and completion of graduation requirements from students in the MEP must be continually implemented to ensure student success (Hillsborough County Public Schools, 2015).

Presently, migrant advocates utilize a strategic set of guidelines to maximize students' ability to succeed in the MEP. Not only do migrant teacher advocates closely follow the GPA and core curriculum requirements for each student, they also proactively find alternative means of placement when a student is considered at risk of failing the program: a career center, HEP (High School Equivalency Program), or Adult Education (Hillsborough County, 2017).

Deficiencies in the evidence. Perez and Zarate (2017) researched what would render support for MEP teachers and staff in order to ensure academic success for migrant children in the PK-12 educational system. Although the researchers collaborated with many others who actively study various aspects regarding MEP, Perez and Zarate's assessment was conducted with classroom teachers in the western portion of the United States. Perez and Zarate (2017) found there is an underwhelming amount of research to support educators and staff in their mission to provide high quality, proven academic strategies that will lead to achievement for migrant youth. Equally important, Green

(2003) conducted a study to gather information on successful teacher contributions given by culturally responsive educators in a high school classroom setting. The study by Green (2003) stated that due to the increased amount of mobility associated with the migrant lifestyle, students are often left vulnerable while facing societal and academic barriers skilled educators would help them to address.

Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2014) discovered most students are marginalized not only by the sociopolitical and cultural beliefs of stakeholders within educational institutions but by the lack of action practitioners take to challenge students on the very issues, such as laws, policies, and practices, which directly affect them. Consequently, Sleeter (2012) addresses the issue of research exhibiting little to no relevant information that will empower educators to tackle culture, racism, and dominating perspectives found within the U. S. educational system. As a result, Gay (2010) suggests that educators must immerse themselves in the role of being cultural organizers, mediators, and orchestrators to successfully empower an otherwise powerless and oppressed population. To do this, migrant teachers must be comfortable being accountable and executing various tasks that ensure a quality academic, social, and cultural experience for their students.

Currently, much of the research concerning migrant youth in the MEP often reflects the student's perspective, performance, and academic outcome. However, there are not as many studies that reflect solely upon the MEP teacher's viewpoint, ideas, and suggestions to improve performance for themselves for the sake of their students. In a study conducted to examine the perspectives of migrant directors, Vocke et al. (2016) revealed the lack of studies focused on the evaluation, collection, and submission of data in-state and across state lines which would aid professionals to increase MEP program

outcomes nationwide. These common problems occur despite the national database, MSIX, or the Migrant Student Records Exchange, which is known to electronically collect migrant student data for quicker access to school records during periods of high mobility (Vocke et al., 2016). Torrez (2014) shares that teachers are still required and expected to develop meaningful lessons, follow state curriculum standards, and promote academic success regardless of how much student information they are able to retrieve from previous school settings.

As a result, educators who have implemented culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) have shown positive and promising results within diverse classroom settings despite it being used sparsely and not implemented throughout the country (Nieto, 2015). In fact, not only does the research have a dearth of information concerning MEP educators, it also does not explore the lived experiences of this population by utilizing Harding's Standpoint Theory. Most of the empirical research in the field is based upon the works of Ladson-Billings, Gay, Bell, Solórzano, Gonzales, Freire, and many others that share a passion for equality, equity, dignity, and justice in the U. S. educational system. Nevertheless, these authors have constructed many of their arguments on the commonly used theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Race Theory, which explore the issues regarding cultural, social, and human capital.

Largely considered a feminist theory, Harding's standpoint theory can also be applied to marginalized and vulnerable populations. Its argument serves to explore the dynamic role, position, and "…importance of a group's experience, of a distinctive kind of collective consciousness, which can be achieved through the group's struggles to gain the kind of knowledge that they need for their projects" (Harding, 2004, p. 36). With this

in mind, a fresh perspective can be gained by understanding the limitations and opportunities marginalized populations have within a given institution. Standpoint theory does not necessarily focus on lived experiences of underserved groups but rather on the social systems which allow dominant groups to establish and maintain social climates that are oppressive and stifling (Harding, 2004).

Audience. This study will likely benefit current and potential administrators, researchers, teachers, community outreach advocates, parents, students, and community (local, county, state, regional, and federal) leaders who are a part of a rural and/or urban migrant community. It is imperative for all stakeholders involved in the educational process for migrant students to realize their role in assisting the MEP teachers and their mission, thereby, positively influencing the success of the program by improving the future of migrant children.

Definition of Terms

Critical race theory (CRT). A conceptual framework that argues the importance of cultural awareness for minorities or people of color in sociopolitical settings. Related themes associated with the theory are: liberalism, storytelling/counter-storytelling, civil rights law and progress, underpinnings of race and racism, structural determinism, essentialism/anti-essentialism, critical pedagogy, and criticism/self-criticism (Delgado & Stefanik, 1993, p. 1).

Cultural intelligence. A complex, multifaceted individual attribute and comprised of four major facets including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral factors (Goh, 2012, p. 400).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). In educational settings, this approach is based on three major concepts: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014, pgs. 74-75).

Culture. An amalgamation of human activity, production, thought, and belief systems (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75).

Funds of identity. The manifestation of an individual in applying the *funds of knowledge* to define one's own lived experience (Estaban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31).

Funds of knowledge. Bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of an entire household (Estaban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31).

High School Equivalency Program (HEP). A federally-funded government intensive transition program designed for at-risk or dropout MEP students over the age of compulsory school attendance that provides academic, social, and vocational services for three ten-week cycles per year (Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996, p. 32).

Identity. A fusion of cultural factors, such as sociodemographic conditions, social institutions, artifacts, significant others, practices, and activities that help individuals formulate their personal beliefs, knowledge, and ideas (Estaban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31).

Migrant child. A child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, through the accompaniment of such parent or spouse, obtains temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work (OME, 2018).

Migrant educator/advocate. The employees of the MEP who work to further their migrant students' education, including certified migrant teachers, migrant teacher aides, paraprofessionals, and clerical workers (Free, Kriz, & Konecnik, 2014, p. 187).

Migrant education. A sector of education which serves migrant children, youth, agricultural workers, fishers, and their families by providing leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to improve the educational opportunities and academic success as they migrate to find work in agricultural and fishing industries (OME, 2018).

New Studies. A movement developed by Sylvia Winter which served to change and shape curriculum by infusing Black Studies, Chicano Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, and Women's Studies to analyze experiences rather than the history or literature of a certain group (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 103).

PASS. A mobile and alternative way to earn full or partial credits toward graduation for the non-traditional migrant student (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004, p. 202).

PFS. Priority for Services: eligible migrant students who are considered at-risk and whose education is interrupted during the academic school year will receive supplemental educational services that meet standards on district, state, and local levels (Hillsborough County Public Schools, 2017).

SMART. Summer Migrants Access Resources through Technology: a national distance learning program for migrant students where students can move from school to school with partnering states and keep the same instructor (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004, p. 183).

Standpoint theory. A perspective that seeks to create group, not individual, consciousness regarding the political and other oppressive systematic struggles

experienced by women and other marginalized groups based on where the groups find themselves socially situated (Harding, 2004, p. 32).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of MEP teachers working in a rural minority high school setting. Additionally, the study is to reveal what led MEP teachers to instruct students, as well as what factors lead to the progression and achievement of migrant youth who benefitted from the services of the MEP. The phenomenological approach allows each participant the ability to share classroom and personal experiences that enhanced their ability to teach rural MEP students. The researcher will interview teachers expecting they expound upon how their life experiences have enhanced their professional contributions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review, the researcher explains the theoretical framework which substantiates this study. Additionally, a history of cultural homogeneity in the classroom is explored, as well as the key challenges experienced by high school Migrant Education Program (MEP) teachers in a rural high school are examined. The current literature is also evaluated, gaps within the literature are clarified, and the research questions are provided to further guide the study.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2016a) asserts that effective teachers are often caring and competent professionals who utilize a vast array of pedagogical methods to engage, educate, and empower students by encouraging critical thinking and personal accountability for learning. Equally important, teachers allow for ample opportunities for students to embrace networking and advocacy. Not only does this role require educators to use an array of a variety of techniques, it also insists they are knowledgeable and experienced in relaying information associated with their content area (Gay, 2002).

MEP teachers deal with migrant children who are often forced to deal with a high rate of mobility, poor living conditions, and inconsistencies in curriculum from various states; moreover, in rural settings, they are encountered with overt racism and language barriers (Torrez, 2014). Due to these factors, Gonzales (2010) claims instructors can have an integral part in the lives of their students by acting as institutional agents who are willing to encourage social consciousness, self-advocacy, and stronger forms of social capital for disadvantaged youth in the high school setting.

Cultural incongruity between migrant and traditional students often necessitates for a variety of adult and peer groups of social capital to be present to gain student achievement (Gross et al, 2016; Quezada et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2004; Solórzano, 1998). This factor also indicates the grave responsibility and overwhelming level of influence teachers and administrators have to create a positive culture, learn and enhance personal strengths, as well as immerse themselves in their students' lives to advocate for equal and fair access to education (Green, 2003). Nevertheless, these actions will never be able to occur without a respectful and consistent dialogue between the educator and students.

Given this information, the teacher must allow for ample moments in which students are able to share acquired knowledge of lived experiences to gain new knowledge in the high school setting (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Gay, 2013; Yosso et al., 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1995). In most traditional settings of education, teachers are taught to instruct students what needs to be known to meet course objectives and standards while making connections for students through real-world experiences. However, to immerse one's self into a continual dialogue where students are given permission to share their insights to enrich the learning process, where the student becomes a source of learning and knowing, is quite unconventional (Gay, 2010; Freire & Macedo, 1995). Consequently, a study in the rural secondary school setting concerning this phenomenon was pertinent.

This study is geared at understanding the lived experiences of migrant educators in a rural high school who dedicated their professional lives to teaching in a rural school setting. District-level leaders are responsible for the recruitment, retention, and

development of teachers through leadership, inspiration, and education (Hillsborough County Schools, 2017). Many MEP teachers must attend specialized training sessions which relate to migrant farmworker family issues and concerns. For instance, ongoing Identification and Recruitment (ID&R) training, along with back-to-school training, professional development activities, technology-based initiatives, and committee meetings improve the skills of MEP educators, recruiters, and advocates who serve migrant students and their families (Hillsborough County Schools, 2015).

Although competent educators from the district come from numerous ethnic groups and backgrounds, the migrant educators are primarily of Latin descent. MEP professionals who serve as teachers to high school migrant students often share similar childhood experiences which allow them to relate better to their student population. In fact, many MEP educators are from migrant farmworker families themselves. Research does support that teachers who share commonalities of lived experiences in the migrant community are often more aware and influential in the lives of migrant students (Nieto & Irizarry, 2012; Nieto, Rivera, & Quinones, 2012; Borjian & Padilla, 2010; Salinas & Reyes, 2004). According to the National Center of Education (2013), more than 100,000 public schools in the United States are in rural areas; therefore, federal, state, local, and district resources should be available to invest in the retention of migrant educators.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptually, this framework for the qualitative study was based on theoretical ideas and emphasized major issues of a phenomenon; assumptions, beliefs, and even expectations about a certain topic are evaluated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Huberman et al., 2013). Not only does it address concepts that allow for the formulation of questions

for the research study, but it also allows for the researcher to identify misconceptions and attitudes that affect one's perspective regarding the topic. In short, theory should act as a guide to explain, explore, and help to examine the data that is compiled through research (Miskel & Hoy, 2013).

Critical Race and Standpoint Theories

In this study, critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2005b) and Harding's standpoint theory will be applied. In the first theoretical approach, critical race theory analyzes the issue of race relations and perspectives from a legal viewpoint (Ladson-Billings, 2005b). The concept of critical race theory has since expanded to Latina/o critical race theory, or LatCrit, which highlights the unique experiences of Chicano/Chicana people, as well as other persons of color that face inequalities and inequities based on their race, class, gender, or socioeconomic status (Berry & Candis, 2013). Additionally, standpoint theory provides a basis for understanding the importance, utility, and unique perspective of marginalized groups from their social position or standpoint (Allen, B., 2017; Harding, 2004). Moreover, it grants the teacher an ability to empathize with their students' struggles with acculturation in a high school setting. The two theoretical frameworks offer a viewpoint for the researcher to evaluate the interview responses of participating MEP teachers once they are acquired.

The researcher of the study depends upon the views which articulate how people make meaning of events experienced in everyday life, what individuals learn from these events, and the common connections found between individuals (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). In addition, the investigation serves to emphasize the essence of the phenomenon and its ability to uncover universal patterns and related themes such as racism,

oppression, cultural struggles, class distinctions, and legal disparities amongst cultural groups (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993).

MEP History

In 1960, the United States was introduced to the unstable and disconcerting plight of the migrant lifestyle. Edward Murrow's documentary, *Harvest of Shame*, depicted the challenges, inequities, and barriers that migrant families faced throughout the year as the result of social mobility. As a result, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA, was implemented five years later to include and provide migrant children with supplemental education needs in each state (Parsi & Losh, 2016). The ESEA was revised as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for the purposes of aiding state education agencies, or SEAs, with interstate and intrastate networking to improve consistency of MEP programs from state to state, as well as to prevent interruption of academic and social services to migratory children, which was enacted in 2002. (OME, 2018). Due to its increasing inefficiency in the public school system, for teachers and students alike, the Act was changed again to improve the success of underserved and high-need students; the Every Student Succeeds Act officially became law on December 10, 2015. In addition, the current Act allows states the possibility to improve equity, academic standards, and classroom instruction for an increasingly diverse set of student populations (OME, 2018).

The influx of migrant families in the U. S. over the past 20 years has been a catalyst of discussion for continued federal funding of MEP and the auxiliary programs, such as the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and the High School Equivalency Program, or HEP. These programs are geared to ultimately close the

achievement gap for migrant youth and increase college and career readiness (Sugarman et al., 2016). The Office of Migrant Education is the sector of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) that provides Title I, Part C funding, contracts, initiatives, and grants to U. S. educational institutions which serve the PK-12 migrant student in the public school setting (OME, 2018). Although this is a different source of funding than traditional teachers, it is mainly due to the nature of the MEP which is for supplemental, not core, instruction. Additionally, Sugarman et al. (2016) state that funding is an important factor to providing migrant youth with high quality instruction that will allow for students to surpass academic expectations while preventing social and cultural barriers that often deter positive secondary and post-secondary outcomes.

Connections Between MEP History and Theories

  Critical race theory. One of the theoretical approaches, critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2014), or CRT, was introduced through the works of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman due to an onslaught of inequalities found throughout legal and social institutions in the 1970s shortly after the Civil Rights Movement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). The development of the theory was based on the Civil Rights Movement's accomplishments being dismissed and repealed in the judicial system. Yet, this was not only apparent in this social institution; it became clear to those in the educational community, specifically educators, as well. Bell (2003) asserted that critical race theory assumes that racial prejudice is a normal and pervasive condition in American society. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (2013) declared critical race theory highlights a counter-narrative that uncovers (a) intersectionality, (b) race, and (c) interest convergence.

Along with the works of Bell and Ladson-Billings, Crenshaw et al. (1995) echoed the call of the landmark studies to enforce CRT by challenging the conversation of "racial discourse" and proclaiming that institutional racism is "…an intentional, albeit irrational, deviation by a conscious wrongdoer from otherwise neutral, rational, and just ways of distributing jobs, power, prestige, and wealth" (pg. xiv). Consequently, these landmark studies would prove to start a movement to reveal, confront, and diminish the structures, processes, and systems of institutional racism that strategically oppress and demoralize people of color (PoC). Throughout the next two decades, critical race theory would prove to have a powerful effect on PoC who expressed a need to advocate for themselves as they experienced an upsurge of institutional and systematic racism in their communities, on their jobs, and in society-at-large.

Concurrently, further evolution of critical race theory emerged within the Latin community; hence, Latino/a critical race theory, or LatCrit theory, was constructed. According to Matamanadzo et al. (2016), LatCrit theory is a "cousin" to CRT and provides a framework for those of Hispanic descent to seek and expect a multidimensional acceptance for not only the social identity of the population but for the "…critical engagements of sex, gender, and sexuality, together with race, gender, and class, as interlocking categories and systems in programmatic terms" (p. 304). Discourse of these issues have been ongoing with LatCrit theorists and have since developed many more conversations outside of the field of law where it was initially conceived. Together with traditional CRT, LatCrit has encouraged many specialized areas of study for a variety of PoC groups. This movement has been purposely and strategically formed to

further the discussion of race, equity, inclusion, justice, and power for society's class relations.

Immigration's influence on LatCrit theory. Fry (2008) indicated that primarily between 1990 and 2000, the U.S. Hispanic population experienced a natural spread in metropolitan counties of the Northeast, as well as counties in the Midwest and West; consequently, the natural boom of births in Latino homes caused younger generations to seek residence in counties with low Hispanic populations. The drastic changes of demographics within these regions led to a demand to change traditional cultural norms, practices, and priorities for these growing communities. Passel and Cohn (2016) state unauthorized immigrant children made up at least 7.3%, or 3.9 million K-12 students in 2014. Specifically, at least 5.9%, or 3.2 million students, had at least one parent who was an unauthorized immigrant parent, and 1.3% (725,000 students) are illegal immigrants themselves.

Furthermore, decreases in immigrant populations have been found since 2007 in states that once grew in numbers: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Oregon (Passel and Cohn, 2018). Although a common misconception is that all migrant youth are illegal immigrants or are of Mexican descent, this is not the case. Yet, these faulty assumptions have led to a surge in discriminatory actions against those considered vulnerable in this population: migrant youth. Many of the educational disparities experienced by migrant students have centered heavily upon social mobility and language barriers.

Standpoint theory. Standpoint theory materialized in the 1970s and 1980s as a perspective based upon the feminist approach allowing marginalized groups to gain

"oppositional consciousness" that would provide society with a more objective view of itself (Harding, 2004). The study uses critical race theory to emphasize the influence of race in the educational system by framing it in a phenomenological approach. Both critical race theory and standpoint theory are similar in their examination of culture, especially in those of marginalized and oppressed populations.

This phenomenological study will explore the impact of culture in regards to migrant educators and disadvantaged migrant students in a rural high school setting. All in all, the two theories support the reasons why migrant educators initially chose and continue to choose to teach in a rural high school.

Applied research on theories. Throughout the investigation of literature concerning cultural pedagogy and its impact in the classroom, it was emphasized how oftentimes teachers are taught to educate students of color to adhere and value cultural norms of the dominant group while silently being requested to modulate their own cultural identity and ideals (Solórzano, 1997). Gay (2002) suggested that teachers must be proactive in communicating to administrative school personnel the benefits of multicultural needs and culturally responsive teaching in all subject areas. Furthermore, Goh (2012) stated that ultimately the teachers' ability to cultivate existing skills, knowledge, and inherent cultural intelligence of students would foster globally involved and educated citizens.

On the contrary, Gonzales (2012) proclaimed teachers, as well as peers, who are acclimated to the high school setting will be able to help with the acculturative transition parents are not able to do. Consequently, students can foster qualities that enhance their chances of postsecondary education. The author further suggested that much of the

current research expressed the negative influences on disadvantaged people of color; however, the resourceful nature of teachers can also present access to pertinent information and opportunities after high school (Gonzales, 2012). Macias and Collet (2016) also expounded in their study the influential work of a teacher who became a mentor and stable source of support to Esperanza, a migrant student, after deportation issues plagued the family. Such institutional support could only be attained through the care of a concerned and compassionate teacher. Through these actions, the teacher's bond with Esperanza allowed the student to trust her teacher enough during her senior year to complete high school requirements and consider achievable postsecondary options.

The researcher also utilized standpoint theory for this study. The concept of standpoint theory is based upon the work of Harding (2004) who believes populations that were considered to have "a view from nowhere" in an imperialistic society should play an integral role in the objectivity of issues stemming from race, class, and culture. As an emerging theory, it grants disadvantaged and marginalized people in a society the ability to reveal concealed thought processes of dominant thinking (Harding, 2004). Nevertheless, the dominant viewpoint of society often challenges this theory based on its adamant belief in traditional norms and values (Harding, 2004). Due to these factors, this theory is able to be applied to migrant educators who tirelessly work to educate and cultivate those in the rural high school setting. Elements within the theory will facilitate the consideration of newly learned ideas when the research for the qualitative, phenomenological study is conducted.

Key Issues for the MEP Educator

High school MEP educators must demonstrate versatility in their role to promote, foster, model, and create change within their organization. Not only do they serve as teachers but they are also known for their ability to counsel stakeholders. Based on the findings of Perez and Zarate (2017), it is the duty of those who serve as educators in the MEP to promote and confirm the cultural and linguistic differences of their students. Additionally, Anderson and Cranston-Gingras (1991) share the importance of challenging other educators' indifference to the cultural issues concerning migrant students by immersing those who are skeptical into activities and initiatives that will educate and, ultimately, change negative perspectives of this disadvantaged population. Similarly, the role of MEP teachers requires one to exhibit a high level of expertise in subject matter and cultural competence while developing a culture that values sociopolitical awareness, critical thinking, and real-world application (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Nonetheless, educators who practice culturally relevant pedagogy continually struggle with the traditionalism of standardized, test-prep curricula that makes it challenging to formulate and maintain strong ethnic studies in the classroom (Sleeter, 2011).

Furthermore, educators are often challenged with the tasks of meeting objectives based on state standards and standardized testing while addressing personal student issues that will break the cycle of poverty and decrease educational opportunities for migrant children (Vocke, 2016; Vocke, 2007). Zalaquett et al. (2007) reinforce how educators of migrant farmworkers must help students find equilibrium between a healthy ability to learn and the knowledge that, with effort, personal and academic goals can be met by each individual. Thereby, Vocke (2007) indicates it is imperative that teachers work

against the segregation, marginalization, and isolation of this student body in their academic setting. Otherwise, without sound educational advice and guidance from school officials and adult mentors, many migrant students will find it difficult to achieve academic success (Gonzales, 2010).

      Cultural conflict. The Seven Areas of Concern (OME, 2016) is an established set of factors that directly affect the lives of migrant farmworker families and their children. They include the following elements: (a) school engagement, (b) English language development, (c) educational support, (d) instructional time, (e) educational continuity, (f) educational support in the home, and (g) health. It should be noted that although these categories adhere to separate needs of this disadvantaged population, the overlap of these needs greatly impacts the students' preparing for life through educational means (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). Through the evaluation of these factors, critical race theory and standpoint theory are examined.

      Social mobility. Findings from Romanowski (2003) indicate social mobility is the major cause for academic interruption regarding migrant youth. In fact, due to mobility, the gathering of accurate data regarding farmworkers from the migrant community can be quite difficult to compile (Vocke et al., 2016). Additionally, Free, Kriz, and Konecnik (2014) explain that social mobility is negatively affected by a variety of capital, including economic, cultural, and social factors which lead to a decreased chance for success in the traditional educational system. However, Salinas and Franquiz (2004) express how educators must also take time to recognize the strengths of migrant high schoolers, such as their high level of resiliency, tenacity, and continued sense of responsibility. Furthermore, it must be noted that many educators recognize how the

struggles associated with a high level of mobility often bring about a unique collection of talents, strengths, and abilities from students' migrant lifestyles and experiences (Free et al., 2014; Salinas & Franquiz, 2004).

School engagement. According to Goh's (2012) view of cultural intelligence, a teacher must be willing to initially reflect on their interest level and motivation before relaying information to students. Consequently, an educator's motivation often reveals one's level of confidence and self-efficacy in adapting to new cultural surroundings and situations. Along with motivation, a teacher's level of knowledge, strategy, and action also plays a significant role in a student's ability to take ownership of their cultural intelligence (Goh, 2012). Equally important, Yosso (2005) expresses the need for educators and others in the educational system to embrace the idea of community cultural wealth within communities of color, which empower [migrant youth] to utilize learned assets they already possess and apply in their homes and communities. These skills should not be exploited by MEP educators but used as pathways to promote advocacy for social and racial justice regarding marginalized youth in the academic setting (Yosso, 2005).

Educational support in the home. Educators who work most effectively with this student population tend to be extremely loyal, respectful, and committed to their students. They remain cognizant of their role in promoting quality and fair educational opportunities for their students (Vocke, 2016; Valenzuela, 1999). In fact, based on the research of Moll et al. (1992), useful knowledge and skills associated with household and community-oriented tasks, also referred to as funds of knowledge (FoK), can often be utilized in meaningful ways to enhance classroom skills and learning. By acquiring

knowledge of students' living situations and family dynamics, teachers are able to adapt classroom lessons into extension activities that build upon readily accessible knowledge, skills, and labor that allow students to thrive outside of school (Moll et al., 1992).

Numerous programs, such as Project SMART, or Summer Migrants Access Resources through Technology, assist students to attain their academic pursuits. Not only does this expand the role of the MEP teacher, it allows the educator to have a more holistic and realistic view of their student body. Furthermore, parents of migrant children are able to provide valuable information which allows the MEP teacher to gain insight and resources that will further help the child succeed in the academic setting (Jeffers & Vocke, 2017; Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Through these practices, educators not only become advocates for their students but researchers of cultural perspectives, values, and attitudes while accepting their role as teacher and cultural being for students (Hogg, 2011).

Educational continuity, access, and instructional time. In fact, with the help of programs like Project SMART, as well as the PASS program and other modes for field-based virtual classroom learning, migrant students are able to continue working on graduation requirements from any location with a computer. Project SMART allows for distance learning to occur between states with the same coursework and instructor (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Consistency is one of the very elements that migrant students lack in their educational lives; thereby, an educator's ability to teach a curriculum to students, regardless of the location, is a monumental feat for all involved. Moreover, the PASS program allows for students to work steadily towards graduation requirements and

allows for scheduling flexibility and curriculum alignment that meets current educational

standards (Geneseo Migrant Center, 2017).

Another option presented to migrant students that provides a continuation of

services by MEP educators is through the implementation of summer school programs, as

well as the High School Equivalency Program (HEP). Teachers that provide instruction

during the summer months often find that they are faced with challenges due to

miscommunication, insufficient resources, and a lack of confidence amongst the student

body (Torrez, 2014). Consequently, this initiative is an opportunity for teachers to

demonstrate their role of empowerment to disadvantaged youth who may be leery of

potential academic outcomes. Additionally, HEP is a program geared to helping migrant

students obtain their high school diploma on a college campus, assimilate with college

students, gain an understanding of collegiate life, and be afforded all the rights and

privileges provided to the university student body (OME, 2018; Martinez & Cranston-

Gingras, 1996). Not only are students provided with the valuable opportunity to be

exposed to the environmental and institutional settings of postsecondary education but

they have the ability to become immersed in the role of a college student through

volunteering, tutoring, and on-campus social activities (Núñez & Gildersleeve, 2016;

Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996).

English language development. MEP educators must remain aware and versatile

in their pursuit to cultivate their students' need for speaking, reading, and writing skills.

However, Coady and Flores (2008) indicate how many educational programs minimize or

discourage the use of native languages entirely while learning. In fact, language is seen in

one of three ways: as a right, as a resource, or as a problem. With this in mind, MEP

teachers must continue to remain empathetic to their students' vulnerability in this area. One specific case in Michigan's MEP summer school initiative rendered that less than half of certified educators working in MEP were bilingual, as a major focus of language development is in primary education. Nevertheless, approximately 40% of MEP teaching assistants and auxiliary staff were bilingual (Vocke et al., 2016). As a result, not only should educational professionals master cultural competency but also be able to deliver messages to students through verbal and written form.

Based on the ideas derived from cultural pedagogy, specifically those supporting the funds of knowledge approach, teachers are able to wisely select curriculum resources when they are related to a student's identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). By learning the English language in this manner, teachers can reinforce basic concepts founded on their students' shared values and beliefs. In short, migrant teachers further express that the whole language approach often allows students to take ownership of their learning, bring rigor and relevance to their classroom experiences, and allow for the transfer of language skill acquisition to occur without the pressure of meeting proficiency (Due et al. 2015; Platt & Cranston-Gingras, 1991).

Health. One of the most unique components of serving as a teacher in the MEP is their role to seek out, advocate for, and refer students and families to resources that will address health concerns. In *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the U.S.* (Holmes, 2013), the exploration of daily migrant lifestyle and the grave conditions that make a vulnerable population even more susceptible to health issues and unsuitable living conditions is explained. For many families, the MEP teacher is the safest and most readily accessible resource to alleviating health care needs. Free et al. (2014) explains

that migrant parents face challenges to manage medical needs because of language barriers, job demands, and mistrust of the healthcare system. Consequently, migrant teachers are often required to address psychological, behavioral, and other stress-related issues migrant youth face to provide support and prevent trauma, frustration, and indifference in students. Moreover, the personal, socioeconomic, and cultural factors, as well as the phases of migration (premigration, migration, and postmigration), can be very challenging to the overall health of those within the migrant population. Each level carries a specific amount of risk and may expose migrants to unnecessary and harmful conditions which compromise safety, health, and personal well-being (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Legislation of MEP and its Challenges

  Underachievement. Based on the findings of the Florida Advisory Committee (2007), despite many high-volume MEP populated programs gaining additional resources and developing more specialized programs to meet student needs, academic performance in the initiative still lagged (p. 12). In fact, Zarate et al. (2017) and Valenzuela (1999) showed evidence of high school students who may exhibit a demeanor of disengagement and nonchalance for one course, yet regularly attend and actively participate in another. These inconsistencies often result from students who, in fact, care about their academic careers; nonetheless, they may value one subject area or teacher over another (Valenzuela, 1999).

  Another scenario that leads to underachievement with high school migrant students is high-stakes testing. Periods allocated for test preparation and practice often conflict with migrant students and their parents' work schedule. With district, state, and

national testing often affecting a student's chances of being promoted or graduating, migrant students are left to decide whether to continue their academic pursuits or drop out of high school (Cardichon & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Through educators' use of academic intervention, teacher support can often influence student success and even promote goals for higher education. Specifically, this is true of undocumented students who feel more pressure to fail in postsecondary pursuits because of perceived organizational barriers (Enriquez, 2011).

In addition, the literature emphasizes the significance of teachers recognizing the value of taking time to advise, encourage, and offer guidelines for endorsing inclusive pedagogy to engage all students in trusting relationships while reducing chances for increased marginalization in the academic setting (Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2015; Valenzuela, 1999). Undoubtedly, migrant students found the role of positive educators to be instrumental by broadening their perspective about postsecondary education, advanced placement courses, and even aiding and informing students about financial issues that would usually discourage them from seeking college-bound options (Enriquez, 2011). Using stretch learning, advocacy, and guidance, educators are change agents who can remove mental and emotional barriers which hinder growth and prevent progressive thinking about one's future.

Lack of representation. All cultural perspectives should be acknowledged and respected; in other words, students of color who possess histories, experiences, cultures, and languages must be recognized and valued in their educational settings (Rodriguez-Valls, & Kofford, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Bernal, 2002). Yet, MEP educators often go unrecognized in the laws, regulations, and policies on which the program is structured.

In general, it is imperative for school districts to employ and retain qualified teachers and administrators who are knowledgeable of the unique needs pertaining to migrant students; essential relationships may be developed by creating rapport and open communication amongst all parties involved (Florida Advisory Committee, 2007). Through genuine understanding and respect for the Migrant Education Program's role, purpose, and staff, the role of the MEP educator will become more valuable and acknowledged within the organization.

Cultural pedagogy. Over the years, critical race theory's framework has caused an alliance to develop amongst scholars who are often a part of disadvantaged or marginalized minority groups. There have been many concepts that support the rise of less dominant cultural groups possessing a specialized set of skills and knowledge that increase their value and influence in dominant cultures. For instance, Ladson-Billings (2014) has evolved her initial ideas for critical race theory into a practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, which is based on academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. However, she found the term limited itself to mere acknowledgement of race instead of permission for disadvantaged youth to celebrate and honor their social views and contributions that are utilized in the global community over time (pg. 82). Subsequently, Ladson-Billings' theoretical view has evolved from a sole focus on race-related issues related to CRT and culturally relevant pedagogy to a vast array of societal issues and needs in cultural sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The expansion of this theoretical approach allows researchers the opportunity to harness past and current themes in critical race studies to advance the importance of recurrent themes.

Community cultural wealth refers to being a distinct set of assets that communities of color utilize to navigate through, survive in, and resist against while experiencing oppressive microaggressions and macroaggressions in society (Jeffers & Vocke, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Accordingly, individuals within these communities depend upon the following forms of capital to demonstrate and embrace their value as a member of society: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic. By these means, members of marginalized cultural and ethnic groups are acknowledged, their input is valued, and their social position remains secure (Yosso, 2005). Thus, these theories are underlined by the seminal works of Freire and Giroux, who focused on the culture of poverty to explain the plight of marginalized groups.

Cultural reflection. Vocke (2007) emphasizes the importance of teachers consistently reflecting on their beliefs and attitudes towards migrant families. This step of the process is often challenging, as it may manifest feelings of frustration, embarrassment, or inadequacy for the educator. However, all stakeholders in the educational process must know which behaviors discourage and hinder migrant youth (Romanowski, 2003). Through this thought process, migrant advocate educators can successfully collaborate as resourceful liaisons between schools and the migrant community (Salinas & Reyes, 2004).

Equally important, migrant educators will be able to establish a sense of belonging for students who feel marginalized in the school setting (Free et al., 2014; Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolon, 2004). Furthermore, teachers must remember migrant students experience an achievement gap based upon not only academic and

economic differences, but through the level or types of peer and adult interactions they are involved in as well.

The very idea of cultural pedagogy defies the concept that education should be void of rich, genuine experiences originating from one's life, family, and community (de los Rios, Lopez, & Morrell, 2014). It is within these moments that MEP educators weave meaningful themes and lessons into their often traditional and seemingly mundane curriculum. In other words, students have strongly asserted their need for relevant and purposeful education that reinforces their identities and grants them the opportunity to become liberated through empowerment (Sleeter, 2011).

Funds of knowledge. According to the findings of Moll et al. (2001) and Hviid and Villadsen (2014), teachers must immerse themselves into the lives of their students and families as participatory learners. Consequently, educators will gain insight on how to transform the domestic knowledge and skills of students into tools for success in the classroom and academic settings. In addition, Paris (2012) speaks of the diminished value academic settings often have towards the cultural knowledge and strengths of students who do not exhibit the dominant cultural language, behavior, and attitudes. These students are often seen as deficient and are expected to abandon their native forms of communication and customs to concentrate on more traditional ways of thinking. Such practices often go against the strong family values and relational style of learning that is mirrored in their familial upbringing, where cooperative learning and group recognition is appreciated more than individual acclaim (Platt & Cranston-Gingras, 1991). Furthermore, Nieto, Rivera, and Quinones (2013) reiterate the students' need for a sense of community,

instead of individualism, within a program with shared values and goals amongst teachers and peers to render student achievement and an academic persona in the student body.

Caring. Gay (2010) stresses the impact of culturally caring teachers because of their strong convictions for high expectations, genuine relationships, and relentless pursuit to facilitate their students' needs in the classroom. Accordingly, Valenzuela's (1999) work on caring emphasizes the educator's necessity to have a keen sense of their students' changes in self-representation throughout the learning process to gain further insight to the emotional and intellectual states of those they serve, especially when a limited amount of student information is provided.

Along with the necessity for a keen sense of intuition or "withitness," Delpit (2006) stresses the importance of meaningful dialogue, hearing versus listening, and the teacher's responsibility to equip students with the knowledge of underlying social codes to fully engage in American life without forgetting to embrace the codes and power relationships found within their own culture. Through teachers allowing themselves to be a resource or an expert, students are empowered to accept their level of "expertness" as well. In addition, the educators must remain open to, and even affected by, various perspectives that challenge traditional views of academic and social culture within the school setting. Bennett (2016) concludes that the role of teachers and staff members may transform into more familial roles, such as grandparents, and bring about the following elements: emotional availability; implicit and explicit socialization; hidden cultural knowledge; emotional and moral support; and opportunities to promote healthy interpersonal skills. It is with these characteristics that personal intervention by MEP

teachers and administrators have, in many cases, been the determining factor regarding student success (Vocke et al., 2016).

Teaching in Rural Schools

  Overview of educators in rural high schools. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2016), 25% of the nation's student population is made up of those in rural settings. Although it is evident that this amount does not account for the majority of those in public education, it does signify the need for attention to such schools. Semke and Sheridan (2012) share that many rural teachers are often overwhelmed and feel ill-equipped to meet the social, behavioral, and educational needs of students. The majority of these teachers believe that fulfilling the role which addresses personal student struggles is another part attached to their traditional job of educator. For the migrant educator, work-related struggles are even more challenging as these teachers must carry the weight of possibly advancing a family's current socioeconomic dynamic and mindset while inspiring a brighter future and generational outcome through the application of academics and progression.

  Significance of culture in rural high schools. Torrez (2014) illustrates how MEP classrooms in a rural high school setting implement certain procedures such as resiliency practices, the use of English at school and heritage languages at home, as well as the use of dual language learning in various lessons to introduce students to new cultural norms and values. These methods often bring about a greater sense of community with teachers, students, and parents. Practices such as these eradicate the false notion that migrant children and their families do not value education and strive for academic success. Additionally, Semke and Sheridan (2012) emphasize the importance of parental

involvement in ensuring students' needs are met. Due to these factors, the Florida

Advisory Committee (2011) shared the need for MEP teachers and staff to remain

innovative through the provision of social services, such as housing, medical services,

and food assistance, prior to high expectations of student success who learn with MEP

educators.

Freire (2005) shared the importance of students being able to express their lived

experiences with others in an academic setting before learning takes place and knowledge

is obtained. Consequently, it is imperative for educators to either have the cultural

competency needed to adequately improve the situation of those they educate or come

from similar backgrounds that will further enhance the rapport and relationship needed to

work with parents and students (Free et al., 2014). Ladson-Billings (2016) concludes that

instilling culturally responsive learning that evaluates social inequity and democracy will

allow students to become critical thinkers, promote self-actualization, and guide students

to becoming productive adult citizens.

Essential Qualities of an MEP Educator

The nature of educating young people requires a great deal of patience, stamina,

and a keen sense of empathy to successfully manage the needs of students. Additionally,

MEP teachers seek to engage and retain migrant youth by consistently developing an

environment of genuine trust, care, competency, inclusion, empowerment, and advocacy

for the sake of their students. Without optimized settings, students are rarely presented

with ideas that will challenge their current perspectives on pertinent trends, issues, and

practices which ultimately affect their communities and way of life (Ladson-Billings,

2014). When students find that the MEP classroom brings a sense of belonging, purpose,

and vision, educators allow students the freedom to create a space that fosters creativity, individualism, and camaraderie in a high school setting (Gibson et al., 2004). Equally important, MEP teachers cultivate and reinforce positive images which show migrant youth what they could possibly grow to become young adults and productive citizens in society.

      Trust. Irizarry and Williams (2013) declared teachers must recognize the vulnerable situation migrant students often experience through poverty, as well as the lack of support and resources they have access to. Consequently, trust and high student expectations are key components for teacher success in the classroom when working with migrant students. Trust is often built as a teacher builds rapport with students, allowing their classroom to be a place where voices are heard, stories are shared, and connections between teacher and students promote accountability, interest, reflection, and social awareness (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

      In addition to the discovery of one's strengths and inherent qualities, it is extremely helpful for MEP teachers to acquire knowledge and demonstrate the importance of learning throughout the process. In fact, educators could reinforce the model of the *learner* role by acquiring the *funds of knowledge* from observing a student and family's way of life through home visits. Not only do these actions allow the educator to become more of a guest learning about the socioeconomic factors and living conditions of the student, it helps the educator to develop a genuine level of trust, respect, and concern for the student's welfare and development (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Moll et al., 1992).

Inclusion. The teacher of migrant students must value the essential quality of inclusion to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for incoming and returning migrant students. Marginalized students of color come with a rich personal history from their home life and experiences that can be embraced and offered as a benefit to the classroom and school culture (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Those who accept and utilize cultural pedagogy as educators, such as MEP professionals, often are aware of these intrinsic needs and the cultural capital students possess. In other words, teachers do not assume students are ignorant and ill-equipped to contribute information during their learning process. In short, an inclusive environment does not simply display an array of students from different cultures; rather it shows the ability of teachers to practice proven strategies which personalize learning for individual student needs (Coady, Harper, & De Jong, 2015). The level of trust a teacher exhibits to students in the initial stages of their school experience secures the level of rapport the teacher needs to bring about empowerment and transformation in the classroom.

Ladson-Billings (2016) mentions prior attempts, such as the New Studies movement by Sylvia Wynter in the 1960s, to stress how curriculum expansion can be promoted by educators as a means of inclusion for students' experiences rather than their historical references in literature. Due to these ideas originating out of political struggle, they were viewed fringe-worthy in K-12 curriculum. In other words, educators who seek to implement cultural pedagogy in the MEP classroom may be discouraged from teaching material that does not directly follow core curriculum standards or traditional teaching protocol. Yet, Coady et al. (2015) concluded inclusion is best demonstrated by teachers

who maximize their knowledge of best practices and seek to promote literacy and language acquisition through scaffolding lessons in a strategic way.

Competency. Findings from the Florida Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2011) concluded that educators need to systematically and successfully collect and evaluate data as a way of enhancing academic opportunities for migrant children. Without this information, many teachers and other professionals involved with the MEP find their work and dedication to the initiative to not yield desired educational results. Competency can be defined as one's ability to be accountable and produce positive results in an efficient, effective, and productive manner. In fact, issues associated with a dearth of content knowledge and credentials are especially troubling for educational institutions which seek accountable and qualified teachers for students in need of language development (Coady et al., 2015).

Empowerment. Regardless of the number of years spent in the classroom, quality teachers are reflective in their actions throughout the course of the year, or even the day. Unskilled educators working with migrant youth may misunderstand the silence and absence of voices whose suffering is the effect of being marginalized for an extended period. Nevertheless, it is essential for teachers to do so to teach and give power to migrant students they influence daily (Reyes III, 2012, p. 61). This intuitive skill is usually maximized by teachers who are self-confident, knowledgeable, assertive, and attentive to the needs of their students. Additionally, Sleeter (2011) indicated how the use of ethnic studies by educators empowers their students to become emerging change agents and researchers to confidently, intellectually, and effectively solve problems affecting their own social, academic, and community settings.

Social agency, advocacy, and agents of change. Stanton-Salazar (2011) declared the importance of an institutional agent to ultimately become an "empowering agent," which is one who is committed to expanding their influence and voice to promoting critical consciousness within an organization, as well as to an existing community and overall society in which their students live. In order to do this, an educator's status within an educational setting and their level of resourcefulness will often determine the impact they have in their work environment (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Based on these claims, Harding's (2004) standpoint theory reinforces the need for group consciousness over the change in perspectives of individuals. As a result, the progression towards improving the MEP educator's role will be done as a shift in the organization's thinking, not just those in the program itself.

Pertinent Research Studies of MEP Teacher Roles

The extensive amount of research regarding migrant youth continues to grow with the increasing presence and relevance to the culture and landscape of the United States. However, there is still a great need for how MEP educators can cultivate this population in the everyday use of best practices and interaction with MEP students and families. These studies indicate some of the commonalities that are effective, as well as some areas that need more attention in the secondary rural MEP setting.

Free et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative research study to evaluate the impact of hardships that are often experienced by migrant youth and the teachers' perspectives of such conditions. The study utilized 20 teachers from one school district. The teacher role was defined by various instructional titles, such as "…certified migrant teachers, migrant teacher aids, paraprofessionals, and clerical workers [of the MEP]" (pg.187). The level of

interaction was one of the components considered when evaluating the employee's

eligibility for the study. Through economic, cultural, and social capitals, the works of

Bourdieu's (1986) analysis of social capital, along with Cardenas and Cardenas' (1977)

evaluation of negative factors affecting the school system, and Lareau's (2002) focus on

factors that affect the working class heavily influenced the research study. Free et al.

(2014) utilized this theory to assume that hardships would have an adverse effect on

migrant youth and families. The Seven Areas of Concern, along with other indicators,

measured the overall findings of the research. In short, the findings of the study indicated

that although migrant youth are resilient, poverty along with social, cultural, and

economic disparities produced a significant amount of difficulty on families.

Additionally, MEP teachers concluded that poverty, health concerns, transportation, and

adverse social interactions (gang activity, poor peer culture, persistent prejudice, and

immigration issues) manifested negative outcomes for migrant students.

A study conducted by Monk (2007) focused on the ability to recruit and retain

highly qualified teachers in rural school settings. The findings were identified by

analyzing certain criterion of rural secondary education teachers throughout the United

States from the 2003-2004 School and Staffing Survey provided by the National Center

for Education Statistics (NCES). The study revealed the challenge for rural areas to have

a high percentage of teachers who meet or surpass standards for quality instruction.

Aspects, such as low wages, locality, poor working conditions, discipline issues, and

challenging student populations led to job dissatisfaction and high turnover for rural

teachers. However, teachers felt limited on their ability to acquire effective ways to

address student needs. These factors affected the teachers' overall level of satisfaction

and self-efficacy. On the other hand, the rural teachers have a higher sense of flexibility and ownership towards school policy along with greater independence. Within the research, it was found that strategies that would increase the retention level of rural teachers included:

- higher teacher compensation;

- implement a "grow your own" approach to identifying teachers who wish to stay in the area and become highly qualified;

- use of professional development and support to increase mentoring;

- conduct ongoing teacher training for working with challenging or underserved populations;

- increase diversity and inclusion teacher efforts within the rural school setting;

- provide financial help and resources for rural schools; and

- keep teacher accountability high for newly hired teachers by providing empowerment and partnership opportunities with surrounding educational institutions.

Moreover, the study considered the teachers' educational level, teacher assessment scores for educator certification, and race/ethnicity as measures for research data. A call to action for the former No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to be considered by the Department of Education was articulated to advocate the need for more attention to rural teachers, students, and communities.

Sleeter (2012) focused on the cultural pedagogy and the multicultural approaches needed to alleviate concerns faced by marginalized student groups. The study identified standardization of curriculum as the major component for stifling the practice of cultural

pedagogy and student achievement with diverse student populations. Furthermore, the claim of elevated focus on meeting curriculum requirements, a decreased focus and time limit on building rapport and meaningful teacher-student relationships, and tapering the ability for teachers to use their creativity and professional judgment have caused more dissatisfaction in performance and capacity for teachers and students alike. Fallacies often associated with cultural pedagogy, such as cultural celebration, trivialization, essentializing, and substituting cultural for political analysis, were discussed. The study concluded that more cultural pedagogical practices and studies should be conducted to help dispel any misconceptions of the purpose and effectiveness of cultural pedagogy. Sleeter (2012) concluded that the current agenda of enforcing rigid, scripted curriculum on underserved students is not only ineffective but also counterproductive to meeting high quality standards of teaching and education.

Another study that affected this research was conducted by Stanton-Salazar (2011) and investigated the role of the institutional agent, or nonparental adults, on empowering low-status students and youth. The role of institutional professionals, or those with a form of authority over youth, was analyzed to indicate the level of impact on students and other institutional stakeholders, such as parents, colleagues, peers, and surrounding community partners. Social capital theory was utilized as the theoretical framework for the study. In a prior study, Stanton-Salazar (1995) revealed the prevalence of nonparental adults, such as teachers, effectively acting as change agents to provide emotional, personal, and informational support to migrant students in need. The study also emphasized the institutional agent as one who exemplified the ability to grant "…resources, opportunities, privileges, and services…" within the school organization

(pg. 1075). As a result, the study concluded that the quality network provided by institutional agents allowed for them to empower and serve as "bridges" to fortify their organizations and provide social capital for all stakeholders. In other words, these change agents allowed for networking, advocacy, and the necessary bonding of stakeholders to take place.

Although there are many more studies that influenced this research, the common themes associated with social mobility, cultural pedagogy, social capital, teacher perception, and ultimately, student achievement, are key elements of providing a voice to MEP educators. Their extensive range of influence is complex yet essential to the success of the migrant youth they serve. Moreover, the urgency to change the students' narrative and aid them as they thrive for promising futures is a constant focus for teachers of migrant education. These educators not only provide resources and academic instruction, they provide hope, opportunity, guidance, and consistency. These qualities are the very characteristics needed to break the cycle of migrant life they desperately wish not to repeat.

Gaps in the Literature

Within the body of research, the role of the migrant educator has not been adequately discussed. Perez and Zarate (2017) shared that although the lack of information regarding educators in the MEP may be due to funding, future research should still be conducted to explore this specific role in migrant education. In fact, the research that does share information about migrant educators often focuses on various forms of capital including social, political, economic, and cultural forms. Hence, very little is known about how teachers influence the current educational barriers their students

view in every aspect of their lives (Free & Kriz, 2016). The cultural proficiency of

migrant teachers lies in their ability to assess their own personal stories, make their lived

experiences relevant to their own professional lives, and transfer those meaningful

lessons and themes to their students thereby becoming leaders of influence and advocacy

in the organization (Free & Kriz, 2016). The current literature still falls behind in its

ability to emphasize the strengths, limitations, and impacts of the MEP teacher's role in a

secondary academic setting.

Equally, MEP and teacher literature also does not provide much information

regarding the rural school setting and its differences from other regional placements. In

fact, most of the studies have been completed in the urban setting. For instance, Ladson-

Billings (2016) often explored disadvantaged students in urban and suburban settings; she

used imagery of metal detectors and advanced facilities, respectively. However, current

research only covers a limited area regarding the environmental and situational factors

which are found within a rural secondary MEP classroom and school. As a result, it is

often challenging for the voice and concerns of the rural MEP teacher to be heard,

acknowledged, and understood by the masses.

Finally, evaluation and classification of MEP educators is a relative issue.

Because of the various definitions that classify what a migrant educator is from state to

state and county to county, the research is not able to share details pertaining to what

qualifications or level of expertise one must exhibit to positively and effectively

demonstrate best practices in the academic setting. Some states have only certified

teachers while others will allow aides, paraprofessionals, non-certified educators, and

even auxiliary professionals to contribute to student and classroom performance.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative and phenomenological research study is to gain insight on the lived experiences of Migrant Education Program (MEP) teachers in a rural high school setting. The research questions have been taken from a study by Free et al. (2014) and a request for the replication of them has been approved by the original researchers via email. In this study, teachers within the MEP were asked to reflect on their role, level of effectiveness and influence, as well as their personal motivations for working with the MEP population. There were two central questions asked to guide the direction of this study. The questions were:

1) What are the lived experiences of Migrant Education Program teachers?

2) How do hardships adversely affect migrant teachers' teaching processes and professional outcomes?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The focus of this study was to gain more insight about the lived experiences of effective MEP teachers who worked in their classrooms as professional educators in a traditional secondary high school setting. Consequently, this study was geared toward examining the factors that impacted the personal and professional areas of teachers who worked in the MEP. Hence, reported are the challenges, impacts, and qualities found within the role of an MEP instructor. Not only did this study seek to find the instructors' level of influence while working with migrant youth, but also sought to comprehend their level of success of a specialized program within an educational organization. In turn, the facilitators of the MEP revealed their ability to promote, cultivate, and attain educational goals and performance standards amid formidable conditions presented in the school setting and personal lives of those they taught.

Despite all factors that may have negatively affected their ability to succeed in the classroom, MEP educators continued to demonstrate competency and mastery of content knowledge and skills to maintain veracity within their profession. Specifically, this was emphasized by concentrating on the need for cultural pedagogy and social identity in the MEP classroom. The beginning of this study, Chapter 1, introduced the current trends and issues regarding this area of research. Its importance substantiated the need for more MEP professionals to have a stronger voice and level of influence in the educational setting. Moreover, it should be noted that when MEP teachers achieved success, the overall school organization benefited as well. As a result, the significance of this research allowed for current and future MEP teachers to consider how to become more effective in

their professional practice. Within the literature review, Chapter 2, an overview of past and current literature allowed for an exploration of what is now known about the role of teachers within the MEP. Finally, Chapter 3 includes the methodology applied to this study. Specific methods of research are covered and the use of them are explained in this section.

Qualitative Research Approach

This study utilized a qualitative approach for the purposes of conducting research. Through this method, a researcher would have the opportunity to discover and evaluate the meaning, alignment, and major tenets of life experiences associated with a phenomenon (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Phenomenology is a form of research used to explore the perspectives and feelings that arise through the personal experiences of one's life. Likewise, Edmonds and Kennedy (2013) stated this method delves into issues that reveal not only the lived experiences of a specific group but the lessons that those individuals come to understand through such interactions. Consequently, this process allows for a sequence of events to be shared and highlighted a story acknowledging a problem concerning a marginalized or disadvantaged population (Creswell, 2009). The interviewing method used in that study collected pertinent information regarding the phenomenon. Thus, the phenomenological approach is applied to this line of study. With this technique, the lived experiences of MEP educators formed and offered readers the chance to grasp the teaching process and experience of those who work in a rural high school setting in the southeastern region of the United States.

Edmonds and Kennedy (2013) stated phenomenology is considered a current method of research due to its ability to examine how individuals define and identify with

their reality. In turn, the researcher examined these accounts to clarify the root of the observed experiences. The approach addressed the challenges people face to connect what they verbally communicate to their unspoken feelings and thoughts. With this, the researcher anticipated that a connection existed between cognitive and emotional states of all human beings (Smith, 2014). Hence, in a phenomenological sense, the researcher attempted to comprehend the experience in its entirety instead of through a categorical method (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013).

Based on the consideration that the mind and body are one unit, a phenomenological study provided a platform for the researcher to make sense of the density, progression, and uniqueness of a situation (Smith, 2014). The process allowed high school MEP teachers to describe their experiences while being interviewed for this study. Furthermore, the procedure allowed the examination of experiences to be revealed from a firsthand account while the participants shared their thoughts and feelings without fear or intimidation. By doing this, the phenomenological process proved to be the most suitable choice for the study.

The teachers who participated in this study shared their personal views regarding their experiences of educating migrant youth in a rural high school. A similar study by Free, Kriz, and Konecnik (2014) was conducted on MEP educators in the public school system. The method of phenomenology was appropriate for the research because of its attempt to gain insight on the lived experiences of migrant educators who worked in the MEP. While the aforementioned study mainly concentrated on various forms of capital that affected the social mobility of students and thus teachers, this investigation sought to gain insight of high school MEP teachers from a critical race perspective.

One phenomenological study conducted by Due, Riggs, and Mandara (2015) emphasized the positive benefits of migrant educators as they infused a supportive model with a holistic and secure classroom environment for migrant youth. The study indicated how the benefits outweighed the shortcomings for promoting educational opportunities for students who were new to the program, and how the program brought growth to teachers, students, and the organization (Due, Riggs, & Mandara, 2015). As a result, educators integrated students into the school community, enhanced the level of inclusive opportunities for migrant youth, and helped students gain more insight on postsecondary options.

Another study that used the phenomenological research method was conducted by Romanowski (2003) to explore the lived experiences of migrant educators in a rural K-12 public school district during a Summer Migrant Education Program (SMEP) with Mexican American students. The author utilized inductive analysis to decipher major themes acquired from teacher data gained within formal 30-45-minute semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of cultural relevance in the MEP classroom along with personal accounts of MEP teacher beliefs regarding the purposeful reflection of their own prejudices, biases, and stereotypes towards migrant children and families.

Philosophical Process of Phenomenology

Within the body of research, the philosophical process of phenomenology was rooted in an advocacy and participatory framework. Creswell (2015) indicated that this perspective emboldens marginalized groups' issues and struggles by allowing research to drive an agenda of action and positive change while giving participants a voice, raising

awareness, and promoting growth in the conditions of the target population. Through the utilization of this worldview, nuances and generalizations were examined to further the discussion about the study. Moreover, Elo et al. (2014) explained qualitative content analysis to allow the researcher's unique ideas and qualities to enhance the process and reinforce the views of those who participated in the study. Consequently, the acquisition of information allowed the reader to gain a new awareness and evidence that is based upon facts provided by the population itself rather than one's own opinions.

The researcher interviewed the MEP staff individually once during a single semester for approximately an hour. The interviews were recorded with the direct consent of the participants. After the interviews were concluded, the researcher gave the participating educators the opportunity to review their recordings through transcripts. It was necessary to include this step to ensure that participants were informed in terms of the accuracy of the transcribed statements within each record.

Participants

For purposes of selecting participants for this phenomenological research study, the researcher chose a purposeful sample of high school MEP educators in a rural high school setting in the southeastern United States. With the use of purposive (purposeful) sampling, participants were identified and selected based on the explicit means or needs of the study (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Accordingly, Smith (2014) recognizes that purposive sampling allows one to retrieve a rich and detailed account of information from participants that fit the requirements of the study.

Participants completed semi-structured interviews to allow for full descriptions of familial backgrounds, life experiences, as well as academic and professional encounters

which permitted the researcher to listen and draw conclusions that revealed issues that needed clarification or further investigation. The researcher interviewed seven rural MEP teachers individually one time within the same semester for approximately 60 minutes each. Interviews were conducted through the collection of audio recordings, if consent was given by participants. Creswell (2013) indicated that once recordings were completed, the researcher allowed all participants to review their personal transcript of the interview for member check purposes which gave participants permission to make changes if needed. This particular action permitted each participant to gauge whether the information gathered was accurately communicated by the teacher. This process helped the researcher to better understand the phenomenon of cultural pedagogy in the role of the MEP teacher and the students who were taught at the rural high school.

Selection of Participants

Sampling technique. The researcher selected an approach for conducting this qualitative exploratory study to understand the lives of the participants. The selected technique, purposive sampling, is most appropriate when a researcher gathers data from those who are the most knowledgeable in that specific field of study (Elo et al., 2014). Furthermore, Creswell (2012) concluded that the population on which the inquiry is based would allow the researcher to bring awareness to a phenomenon while giving attention to the voices of a population that often goes unheard. Without the inference of causality or preconceived conclusions, the interpretation of the phenomenon is shared through accounts of the people within the study (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013, p. 112).

Procedures

Within this section, the research questions were stated and evaluated to demonstrate their significance to the chosen set of procedures. Further, it described how data was gathered to evaluate each specific inquiry. The researcher planned and met with each participant at an agreed upon site to conduct an interview session. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and explained the interview process in its entirety to the participant.

The researcher based the current proposed study on the following research questions with the application of a qualitative approach: What issues have Migrant Education Program (MEP) advocates experienced in regard to building rapport and relationships with disadvantaged students in and outside of the classroom?

1) What are the lived experiences of Migrant Education Program teachers?

2) How do hardships adversely affect migrant teachers' teaching processes and professional outcomes?

In order to answer these research questions, interviews will be conducted (see Appendix).

Creswell (2004) expressed the unique yet holistic approach that phenomenological studies offer researchers as they delve into complex issues in society (p. 47). For the purposes of this study, this method was utilized to construct the sequence of steps. An e-mail was sent to the district along with the administration of the specific high school to gain approval to conduct research at the site. After the Institutional Review Board approved the study, an initial meeting of interest was held in the media center at the school site to discuss details and specific requests for the study. Once seven MEP

teachers agreed to participate in the research study, individual interview times were scheduled at a place and during a time most convenient for them. Once all voluntary participants received an individual interview time, the interviews were conducted.

Before the interviews were conducted, all participants signed a consent form. As a result, participants were able to express a wide range of views and perspectives to show a thorough examination of their input (Creswell, 2004, p. 47). Each interview varied in length and time as it depended upon the responses of the interviewee. However, no interview lasted longer than one hour, and pseudonyms were allotted for each teacher. The data was collected, categorized, and organized in an order based on the qualitative approach. A pseudonym, such as a letter or a number, was assigned to each participant to protect their identity.

Since the interviews were semi-structured, participants were allowed to address pertinent issues that were uncovered in the interview along with similar concerns. Each teacher was given time to explain their views in a thorough and candid manner. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. After interviews were recorded, the researcher allowed all participating teachers the opportunity to review interview transcripts; this was done with the distinct purpose of permitting participants to clarify any information that needed to be changed or corrected from the interview. Creswell (2014) asserted that this process often helps to clarify the experiences of the participant for the researcher and emphasize more commonalities within the interviews. Once interviews and transcriptions were completed, the audiotapes were destroyed as a way of upholding confidentiality of the study participants. Furthermore, the data and interview responses were kept in a locked cabinet. Since the interviews and transcriptions

are complete, the data will be destroyed in three years to guard the confidentiality of study participants.

Approval was acquired from the school district's superintendent and the school principal and acceptance from the University's Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to conducting the study. After approval from both parties, the researcher met with the participants to explain the study and actively recruit voluntary participants. The researcher carefully assessed the rights of participants in the study along with the participants' obligations to the research. All participants of the study were given an adequate amount of time to evaluate the study requirements: they assessed the consent form and obtained any other information related to personal questions and concerns. After the teachers' agreement to participate within the study, the researcher requested that all participants sign the consent letter. A copy of the consent form was given to participants. As with the data from interview responses, the original copy of the approval letter and all adult consent forms remained with the researcher in a locked office cabinet. The interviews and transcriptions were finalized, so the data will be destroyed in three years to prevent the confidentiality of study participants being compromised.

Instrument Description

Participants of the study were interviewed by answering open-ended, semi-structured questions regarding their perspectives and beliefs as an individual in the role of an MEP educator in a rural high school setting. The interview protocol created by researcher Valerie Fields was replicated by the current investigator of this study as a primary instrument for the collection of data. The interview questions and themes were developed to address and enquire about the problem and offer opportunities for the

participant to explain their standpoint based on the questions. Creswell (2013) suggested that through the careful initiation of discussions of the subject, uncovering certain themes while probing and highlighting beliefs from participants' responses, helpful information could be retrieved from a conversation. Although the premise of the interview protocol developed for this study was developed by Fields, Free et al. (2014) also played a significant role in the researcher's verbiage in questioning. Free et al. (2014) declared that while each migrant teachers' experience was different, the common focus was to support, manage, and enhance the Seven Areas of Concern for migrant youth and families through the MEP. The major areas of focus were educational, economic, and social equity. Free et al. (2014) also indicated that the Seven Areas of Concern (OME, 2018) provided a foundation for understanding the process that affected the daily routines, decisions, roles, and tasks of the migrant educator. Their goal centered around the choices that affected the lives of their students and families, the rural educational school setting, and the quality of community life. Free et al. elucidated that the OME's paradigms provided principles for organizing knowledge based on social justice and racial equity. Edmonds and Kennedy (2013) stated that researchers should be able to gather pertinent information about each individual's perspective and gain insight to the shared experiences of the group as a whole.

Creswell recommended that a researcher should "reduce her or his entire study on a single, overarching central question and several sub questions" (p. 138). He emphasized that in phenomenology it will help to establish the components of the *essence* of the study. The interview protocols created for this study followed this recommendation. The central goal that guided this study was to investigate how the experiences of young adult

immigrants in educational services contribute to an increase in their involvement in the

activities of their community. The sub-questions that guided the study were the basis of

the interview protocols used as the data collection instruments for the study.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data in this study was organized to indicate what MEP teachers

value and perceive as benefits and problems in the roles and lived experiences they

encounter. A structural description was utilized to explain recurrent themes and

experiences associated with the phenomenon to gain deeper meanings from the lived

accounts of MEP teachers (Groewald, 2004, p. 50). In this study, an extensive set of data

was provided from the migrant educators, and the data dictated the analysis.

The researcher read the transcripts of teacher interviews multiple times to identify

major themes that might present themselves within the data. Punch (2009) clarified the

useful method of coding, or strategically organizing data by placing tags, names, and

labels on acquired information (p. 176). Coding is usually seen as the foundational step

for the study and is central to understanding the results of participants' responses and data

(p. 175). The researcher coded early for this study. Moreover, the transcript was recorded

in a Word document with numbered lines for easy reading. Color coding was utilized to

identify themes for the study; specific themes will be discussed in the "Findings" section

of this study.

The use of semi-structured interviewing allowed the participants to freely

expound upon their overall experience as an MEP educator. Factors such as their family

history and upbringing, teaching experiences, and academic endeavors, helped the

researcher capture pertinent information while gaining keen insight about issues that may

need to be investigated further. As a result, the researcher sought to comprehend the phenomenon regarding the various cultural norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes of the MEP teachers and those they teach in a rural high school setting.

Ethical Considerations

The American Educational Research Association (2011), or AERA, emphasizes the essential duty of researchers to conduct research studies in a professional and responsible way to protect the fidelity and integrity of the scholarly work. Principles such as professional competence, social and scholarly responsibility, integrity, respect for the diversity, respect, and rights of people were mentioned (AERA, 2011). Throughout the study, cognizance to rightfully represent participants was reflected to ensure data is collected, analyzed, and published in a clear and ethical way.

Trustworthiness

According to Elo et al. (2014), trustworthiness is established through the effective gathering of information, careful evaluation of findings, and the precise discussion of results. Furthermore, the findings of Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized the importance of establishing trust and credibility by utilizing member checks to keep the best interest of participants at the forefront while ensuring the reliability of narrative accounts. In this qualitative research approach, the researcher encouraged the teacher participants to respond openly to questions and share their perspective. As a result, the researcher was able to ensure that content was both trustworthy and reliable by allowing participants to review the interview transcripts in detail. It was the right of all participants to feel comfortable and secure as they extracted any content they wished to remove prior to the final publication of the research being produced.

Potential Bias

Along with Lincoln and Guba (1985), Edmonds and Kennedy (2013) reinforced the concept of participants reading all transcripts in a group format to reduce researcher bias. However, prior to the study being conducted, the researcher also presented several internal biases to the study. One bias brought to the study was the researcher currently works with the prospective participating teachers at the school site. In addition, the researcher was a professional educator for 13 years and has met many of the migrant students who the MEP educators served. As a result, the researcher was emotionally and professionally invested in the MEP student population that the migrant educators aided for academic excellence and graduation purposes. Another source of bias the researcher presented was the ethnic group and cultural background one identified with as a demographic indicator. Although these biases were present, it was the researcher's belief that reviewing data openly with each participant for clarification purposes would maintain consistent fidelity throughout the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

This chapter outlines factors that proved to be pertinent in the research. The participants were able to share their lived experiences and perspectives regarding their insights and revelations about teaching in the MEP secondary classroom setting. The interviews conducted with the subjects used a qualitative instrument that focused on key areas of cultural pedagogy and migrant education. The researcher conducted interviews to understand the teachers' motivations, sensitivity, and approaches to working with migrant students by using a list of modified questions developed in a study by Valerie Fields and inspired by Free et al. (2014). The results of research data are presented in this chapter. The latter portion of this chapter presents themes that manifested throughout the study. The results helped the researcher conclude how perceptions and experiences from MEP educators influenced their approach and use of cultural pedagogy in the secondary migrant student classroom setting. The information provided greatly contributed to answering the research questions.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What are the lived experiences of Migrant Education Program teachers?

Research Question 2. How do hardships adversely affect migrant teachers' teaching processes and professional outcomes?

Potential Research Bias and the Role of a Researcher

The researcher initially was confronted with the research topic through work as an educator of the school district as well as being an area resident. In phenomenological

studies, the researcher utilizes the qualitative instrument to identify how common themes are viewed differently by each participant (Creswell, 2015). With this in mind, the researcher intently interpreted findings in a scholarly manner and used explicit language to maintain the integrity and validity of the study.

Creswell (2015) states that the research is often crafted and influenced by the experiences of the researcher; thereby, the researcher is guided in questioning by their personal knowledge rather than by theory alone (p. 19). The researcher has been employed in the district as a high school and adult educator for 13 years. For the past 12 years, she has worked in the same district where her research has taken place. Additionally, she has a child who attends one of the district's schools. The researcher proposed this study to the school district, as well as to the IRB, based on the interest of being a traditional high school teacher without adequate knowledge of the migrant youth program. According to the district (2017), Hispanic students comprise the majority of the MEP population (96.8%) and differ vastly from racial/ethnic demographic of the non-migrant population.

Through personal, academic, and professional experiences, the researcher analyzed and gained an understanding of the professionals who seek to educate, guide, and progress the lives of these youth. The lack of knowledge from traditional high school educators serves as a grave issue for MEP educators who educate and facilitate migrant students who often struggle to succeed in the high school setting. By working as a professional educator for 13 years and serving as an active support and resource to parents, colleagues, and students, the researcher has increased knowledge in this area. Moreover, instruction received as a doctoral student in the EdD in Organizational

Leadership program has also allowed the researcher to learn the ethical and moral responsibilities of conducting a research study.

Based on the level of experience from participants, coupled with their knowledge of cultural pedagogy in the classroom, the researcher theorized that increased levels of participant experience and knowledge of best instructional practices in an MEP setting would correlate with a higher level of MEP success and a decreased rate of program ineffectiveness. Moreover, the researcher intentionally worked with participants in a respectful and equitable way to alleviate and manage bias as well as to ensure the data collection and analysis process was conducted with the highest level of integrity.

Relationship Between Researcher and Participants

Receiving truthful accounts from participants during the interview process is paramount in conducting a qualitative study. In fact, the voice of the participant, not the researcher, must be the one reflected in the findings (Elo et al., 2014). The level of trust with the participants was greatly influenced by the researcher's role as an educator in the district. The participants expressed their lived experiences, opinions, and thoughts about the MEP classroom and their various roles within it. As a result, participants were able to respond to questions from the qualitative instrument designed for the study. The researcher was able to listen and record statements through audio recordings completed at the time of each interview.

Background of Participants

The interviewees comprise a sample of seven participants who were considered secondary migrant education teachers from middle and high school rural classroom settings. There were five female and two male participants in this study.

Secondary migrant educators from rural settings met with the researcher to recall lived experiences within the MEP classroom. Interviewees agreed to be interviewed by completing a consent form for participation in the research study based on the standards of the International Review Board and expressed perspectives regarding the secondary MEP classroom setting.

MEPT1 is from the United States and is of Mexican descent. The participant came from a migrant family and has experience as a migrant worker. During childhood, MEPT1 migrated from Florida to Michigan during the school year. MEPT1 obtained a bachelor's degree in microbiology and received a professional teacher's certificate after completion of the Alternative Certification Program (ACP) for the State of Florida.

MEPT2 is Cuban and has no history of migrant work experience no family history associated with migrant family lifestyle. MEPT2 was also an ACP recipient and majored in international studies and divinity.

MEPT3 is Mexican with no first-hand experience as a migrant worker. However, the participant's mother traveled and worked as a migrant worker and often shared stories about the experience. MEPT3 has worked as a teacher for 15 years and has worked primarily with the MEP middle school population.

MEPT4 is of Puerto Rican descent, immigrated to the continental U.S. in their mid-20s, and grew up in extreme poverty as a child of a migrant family. All of MEPT4's teaching experience has been in the high school MEP setting, and the participant has served as a professional educator for 13 years.

MEPT5 was a migrant worker and migrated to Florida, California, and Michigan throughout each school year. MEPT5 has worked in education for a total of 15 years with

the first two years in adult education and the remainder in migrant education. MEPT5 is originally from Mexico and moved to the United States by receiving sponsorship from his parents.

MEPT6 is originally from Cuba, moved to the United States at 14, and reported having no direct migrant experience. However, MEPT6 lived in Mexico for approximately eight years and credited this time as their way of acquiring knowledge about the culture, lifestyle, and perspectives of migrant families. The teacher has worked in both adult education and MEP with 14 years of MEP classroom experience in the same middle school.

MEPT7 was a migrant worker and travelled to Michigan, Ohio, and North Carolina as a child before the family settled in Florida after finding stable employment. Additionally, MEPT 7 is the only participant who has acquired MEP experience with the Pre-K, K-12, and OSY populations. This participant has worked for 17 years as an educator and currently works in the high school setting. The demographics of all seven participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

Name	Years in Education	Initial Reason for Teaching	Years in MEP	Gender	Ethnicity	Highest Degree
MEPT 1	11	To align with youths' academic schedule	10	F	Mexican	Bachelor's
MEPT 2	11	To help Hispanic youth	10	M	Cuban	Master's
MEPT 3	15	Former MEP student	14	F	Mexican	Master's
MEPT 4	13	Offered position while teaching in library	13	F	Puerto Rican	Bachelor's
MEPT 5	15	Former MEP student at school	13	M	Mexican	Master's
MEPT 6	14	Desire to teach	14	F	Cuban	Bachelor's
MEPT 7	17	Former MEP student	17	F	Mexican	Master's

Note: MEPT = Migrant Education Program Teacher

Themes of the Study

Themes of professional MEP secondary educator experience. Within 11 themes coded in transcripts from the interviews with the MEP secondary teachers, the following were highly emphasized: (a) advocacy, (b) empowerment, (c) education, (d) change agency, and (e) social responsibility. The migrant education teachers also shared their personal academic paths and family histories along with the effects each element has had on their professional careers. Even though most of the interview protocol questioning did not call for lived experiences outside of the classroom, many were still able to connect and draw conclusions regarding how their past influences their teaching

approach today. Within the interview process, the secondary migrant education teachers became enthralled when sharing key elements of their lived experiences. Each teacher defined a successful secondary MEP teacher as one who is empathetic, caring, inviting, nurturing, and focused on meeting the needs of their students and families.

Table 2 displays the common themes associated with the postsecondary academic experiences of secondary migrant education program teachers.

Table 2

Thematic Findings: Postsecondary Academic Experiences of Secondary Migrant Educators

Themes	MEPT1	MEPT2	MEPT3	MEPT4	MEPT5	MEPT6	MEPT7
1. Academically supported during postsecondary experience		X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Self-motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Majored in education						X	
4. Majored in non-education field	X	X	X	X	X		X
5. Worked in another profession before education	X	X	X	X	X		X
6. Believes PS education prepared them for classroom						X	
7. Feels school organization respects their MEP role	X	X	X	X	X		X

Note: MEPT = Migrant Education Program Teacher; PS = Postsecondary

Advocacy. Without the persistent presence of teacher advocacy as a constant element for change in school organizations, students and parents within the MEP may not receive the adequate attention needed to be successful in and out of the classroom. The crucial role MEP teachers play to bring voice and reason to marginalized MEP youth promotes awareness of the current trends, issues, and struggles they face each and every day. MEP teachers are well aware of their role when it pertains to the needs of their

population and agree efforts would not be fulfilled nor effective without a consistent dialogue between their department, school administration, district personnel, and other stakeholders within the school setting.

The voice of MEPT2 clearly indicated the impact teachers of the migrant program must have to advocate on behalf of their students:

> [The system's] idea is: "Let's just enroll students that are going to finish." It's a numbers thing. But, on the migrant side, we can't see it by numbers. We have to see it by the cases at the school. So, I had to advocate to let him be enrolled, explain he gets extra years. [I] tell the student, "You may not finish the first time around but you can come back." It took a lot of dialogue between me and the guidance counselor and the family, and he finally decided he would come.

Educational needs are not the only issues that mount against the success of an MEP student. The scarcity of personal items such as food, clothing, shelter, and other amenities affect their ability to cope in academic settings. MEPT4 emphasized the importance of this problem and the ramifications of the MEP students' social standing:

> …if you take care of the social issues, if you make sure that those kids have food at home or they get those glasses that no one knows that he needs, if you keep taking care of those, they will perform as well if not even better than the regular students. It's just that sometimes they have so many needs and nobody knows or nobody can pinpoint them. Or they are not aware of them. They go by without.

The constant presence of danger and uncertainty never goes away for the migrant family—or the migrant student. MEPT5 explains why students often choose to go

without basic personal needs and resources or sacrifice their own comfort to further

protect their family:

> Well, one of the main things that a migrant family that migrates here in the United
>
> States and, actually, crosses illegally, pretty much—I was brought here, pretty
>
> much the same way and eventually was sponsored through my parents. One of the
>
> issues, I guess, would be documents and traveling back and forth. From one town,
>
> even county to county, they could be stopped for any infraction or whatever. If
>
> they ask for identification and they don't have it then they could call Immigration
>
> and that would be an issue for any of the families in any state. But the fact that
>
> they have to travel and cross different state lines, that risk is even greater.

The truth is migrant students often have many internal struggles to contend with

due to the instability and unpredictability their family or personal situation brings. As a

result, it is imperative that MEP faculty not only stay current about how to handle crisis

situations, but remain aware of helpful social agencies and related resources to alleviate

immediate concerns that may jeopardize the welfare of an MEP family member or

student.

> MEPT5 further declares:
>
> So, it's always been on my mind, any time at the end of the school year when
>
> families are going to be leaving. I'm just like, "Look, make sure to be careful.
>
> Look at, you know, when driving, follow the driving rules and everything. Follow
>
> the laws while you're driving," because I know it's several states some drive.
>
> They move to Georgia, then South Carolina, then they go to Ohio. Eventually,
>
> they end up in New Jersey or they can also stay in Michigan as well. Then, from

there, they travel back to Florida. But, there's different state lines in different counties that, I guess, are a little bit more aggressive than others with people who are driving—especially, if they see a tag from another state.

Empowerment. Empowerment is demonstrated in a variety of ways in and out of the MEP secondary classroom. Nevertheless, migrant education teachers believe it is a key element which aids them in their ability to reach and retain the minds and hearts of their students and families. It also makes a great impression on the secondary school organization over time. In other words, empowerment brings forth awareness and enlightenment to all.

MEPT3 shares the admiration she holds towards her MEP students: "I always told my kids that they are way more resilient than I could ever be." It is no surprise that many migrant educators share this sentiment. Along with the words from MEPT3, MEPT6 also indicates how her students inspire her in the classroom:

Oh, my God, I love my kids. I adore my kids. They're just the best. They're the sweetest; they are the smartest; they are just the most wonderful thing in the world. I love helping them. And they are very appreciative of everything you do for them and so are the parents.

MEPT2 asserts how they remain motivated about bringing a strong level of influence to the school setting by promoting empowerment through diversity:

When I was in college and graduate school, I would always try to be involved in Hispanic development, Hispanic outreach clubs. My graduate school seminary was not very diverse and so, I was definitely a voice for diversity—trying to include more Hispanic students and Hispanic outreach. So, I don't know if it was

ever my class or a specific thing in my education itself but it was my own personal passion woven into education and anything else I've done.

Even though it should not be assumed that the MEP classroom is solely comprised of Hispanic students, great pride is taken to celebrate the cultural makeup of students in the MEP classroom. With storytelling, students are able to empower, acknowledge, and uplift themselves through the voices and accounts of their MEP teachers. MEPT3 also highlighted the importance of recognizing the racial and ethnic makeup of students in a positive and endearing way. Based on their academic experience in the traditional setting, they found the absence of this practice to be disheartening to their unique circumstance as an advanced student and person of color:

> When I was little, I was always in the advanced classes. And, you know, back then, things were like, "You're in advanced. You're in the regular. You're in the low classes." So, being in advanced classes, I never had any Mexican friends or saw any Mexican friends until high school. I didn't get Mexican friends until high school.

It shaped them as a student and still remains a primary factor in how they view their role as an MEP educator: "I don't know if it's since then, or even now, like, I notice that. I notice people of color, or lack of people of color. So, I don't know if that affects me in certain ways." MEPT3 brought personal perspective into context and connected it to the obvious attitudes of colorblindness and codeswitching her students often face in academic settings.

One of the best things a migrant educator can do when these implicit generalizations and stereotypes become overwhelmingly awkward, uncomfortable, and

demeaning is to keep their educational pursuits in perspective. MEPT1 strives to

encourage students through words and actions by stating:

> I think it definitely brings out the best in me…having that hard labor instilled in
>
> me. People always ask how do I do it. I think, when I talk with the students, I tell
>
> them "You're here for a reason." And, so, it does bring out the best in me in order
>
> for me to the best with them.

Along with the use of specific praise for students, MEPT1 shares how they often

commend parents for their dedication and hard work towards their child's education at

Senior Awards Night. "They could have chosen to not be here in the state. You could've

chosen for them as well. 'Hey, you're not going to go to school. We need you here to

work.' So, I thank them for letting me work and be a part of their lives." At times,

MEPT1 empowers the minds of their students by providing the caring element of "tough

love." MEPT1 stated:

> I found a way to work with the student—the students that were my worse
>
> discipline problems—and I found a way to work with them where they knew I
>
> cared enough that I wanted them to go on and make something of themselves. Of
>
> course, being middle school age, you're not thinking like that at all.

MEPT7 also indicated the need to empower parents when their children faced

social issues and concerns that would hinder or derail their academic growth. An example

of this was indicated through the participant's story in which a student was being

recruited in a neighborhood gang during his ninth-grade year. Due to the teacher's

successful establishment of relationship and rapport with the family's two older kids

(which were former students), the parents of their third migrant student trusted the MEP

teacher's judgment and advice about their child's change in demeanor. MEPT7 shared

advice to combat the family's dilemma:

"Have you noticed any changes in the way he dresses?" Because, you know, we

were having a lot of gang violence at that time. And, she goes, "Well, yeah, he

just wants to wear black and the red, and the khaki." And, I said, "Well, let me

talk to you about some of these things that could be related to, you know, gang

things."

Furthermore, MEPT7 encouraged the parents to reclaim their roles and

responsibility to protect and guide their son to behave or change that would promote

stability and success in the MEP classroom and beyond. MEPT7 described this

intervention as a necessary measure to rebuild the family unit's focus at home and with

school:

I said, "Why don't you go through his closet and you take some of that out and

bring in other colors?" And, "why don't you see what he says? Because I have a

feeling he's falling into [gang activity]."

Along with the uplifting of parents involved in the Migrant Education Program,

teachers often find they must inspire their students as well. Teachers indicate that they

adopt many roles to provide a more holistic approach to their craft of teaching. MEPT2

explained:

I think it's the fact that you get to see lives change. In my role, specifically, these

are the students that "fall between the cracks" because the parents have little

education and they don't feel really empowered to advocate for their kids. So, this

role is more than a teacher: it's a coach, it's a mentor, it's a teacher, it's many

roles for the student and the parent. So, that's what keeps me coming back year after year.

The common misconception is often that migrant parents are uncomfortable with school settings, especially due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with the environment, and a lack of knowledge regarding academic protocol (Vocke, 2007). MEPT2 highlighted this common belief held by many stakeholders unaware of the migrant population's issues: "I think giving parents a voice is a key issue. A lot of these parents are the opposite of 'helicopter parents.' I'm going to coin the word 'submarine parents.'" When the participant was asked to elaborate on the term, MEPT2 stated:

> That can be interpreted as not caring or apathy, but when your job demands you to be out whenever the sun is out, that's your top priority. So, giving those parents a voice, empowering them, helping them bridge the gap between them and the school, helping them navigate the school system, I think that is one of the primary pieces of what I've been doing these past few years.

Given this information, it should not be assumed that a migrant parent's absence means they have elected the right to waive their rights and responsibilities as an active support in the life of their migrant child. In fact, MEP teachers extend their role as surrogate parents to ensure students feel a strong sense of belonging, value, and trust amongst them. MEPT7 details what it takes to confirm for parents that their children's education and welfare are safe and accounted for:

> If the parent doesn't know what the student is expected to do or what some of the requirements are for graduating, then they're kind of like "out there." All they can do is tell the kid, "Hey, did you need to get up and go to school?" "Have you

done your homework? Yes? Okay." And, at the end or the middle of the nine weeks, it's like, "Why do you have a D? Why do you have a F? Why did you miss five days?" So, I've been big on educating the parents.

MEPT7 further added, "If you don't make it to a conference, that's okay. That's why I'm here. My door's open. Every day of the week, you can call me or you can stop by…" Interventions done in the simplest of ways provide solutions to complex problems that can prevent graduation requirements and class completion from occurring. Empowering the parent is about encouragement, extension, and educating in excellence.

Education. MEPT1 expressed the importance of how social mobility issues experienced as a child often affects students in the MEP classroom. Not only is this important for MEP educators but it is especially essential to know for non-MEP stakeholders who work with the students each day. The participant believed their students' experiences often mirror their own personal experiences of the past. She recalled:

> Ever since I remember, and this is going back to my childhood experience, my mom would leave me with my siblings. So, I would care for them, feed them, and cook for my mom after she would come home from working in the fields. So, at a very young age, I knew how to do stuff and if I didn't know how to do stuff, I would have to ask. That part is what helped me survive at USF.

In addition, each of the MEP teachers expressed their ability to become more effective as a result of on-the-job learning. Their philosophies toward lifelong learning, resiliency, grit, and growth mindset are inherent in the role and experiences they share.

MEPT4 remembered what allowed her to gain momentum and results in her initial teaching experience:

> [My postsecondary educational experience] gave me structure. We have to follow education, theories, learning styles. You have to educate yourself with all this information if you want to teach, if you want to convey information to others. So, it gave me focus; it framed it for me.

> The level of resilience migrant youth must muster to defeat the odds is nearly an insurmountable feat. To achieve it, it takes an individual making a conscious effort to commit to thoughtful, intentional decisions about organizing their goals and objectives for the future.

> Immediate familial relationships that are consistent, healthy, and dependable act as great resources for MEP teachers for collaboration to bring students closer to graduation. Most of the participants either had personal experience as a migrant worker or vicariously learned about the experience through immediate family members. Those with such knowledge indicated that this allowed their relationships with migrant youth and family members to flourish. MEPT1 recounts her personal story:

> Growing up migrant, we would go-- we would pick the crops in Michigan, and we would start school there. The schools there, of course, were different. So, when we would come back to Florida, most of the times, academically, I was able to focus and just get my work done. It does, honestly, affect the way your academic—you don't get to do the things, I would say, "stable" children get to do.

> Another participant, MEPT7, shared a similar perspective to that of MEPT1's educational training while migrating:

I remember up in Michigan and North Carolina even, the schools were K through 12. So, I remember walking in the school and there were these little, tiny kids like myself, and then there were these big kids, like, high school kids. And, in the hallway, we would cross each other. I thought "What?" Because in Hillsborough County, you have elementary, middle, and high. So, it was really tough for one.

MEPT7's recollection of migrating emphasized the plight of transitioning mentally, academically, and physically from one curriculum to another:

I remember just walking in because we would start school on the first day up north, but when we left and came down here like a month later, classes had already begun. So, we would walk in and everything would already be established, and we were trying to learn where the classrooms were.

Although this study serves as a way of promoting a discourse about secondary migrant education programs, MEPT7 revealed the relevance of students establishing relationships that would last to help normalize the migratory sites and experience:

Going back, we knew some of the migrant kids because they were "in the same boat" as us. But, you know, it would help that we would come back to the same area because then you could remember some of the kids. So, you know they're not migrant but you could say, "Oh, yeah. I remember you from last year." It was a lot scarier going up north because you would only be at those schools for not even a month, so you couldn't establish any type of relationship or anything. That's what I remember.

Strong family connections greatly help through transitional living situations, as MEPT7 further asserted:

I don't remember struggling academically only because our dad was constantly

pushing us. On school, he was on top of the meetings and all of that. But, the

moving part of it, in and out of schools, and I've always been kind of shy, it made

me think, "Ooh, here we go again." That was the hardest part: adapting.

Yet, not all aspects of the educational process for MEP teachers with direct

experience were negative. MEPT5 recalls the ability to manage the workload of migrant

farm work and schoolwork throughout the academic school year:

I worked really hard in the fields as well for the harvest-- during the summers,

during the weekends, during the afternoons-- while I was attending schools. So, I

didn't have a clear picture at the beginning. So, my goal was to do the best I could

in academics. I was also involved in sports. I did soccer. I did track. I did cross

country. And obviously, I saw there was opportunity out there and got offered

three scholarships for all three sports.

Research suggests that migrant students who become involved in extracurricular

activities, at any age, often have better academic success, positive attitudes and beliefs

about school, and adapt quickly and remain resilient in academic settings which

decreases the likelihood of dropping out (Peguero, 2011). MEPT5's experience reinforces

these findings and proves it may be a factor to breaking the oppressive cycle of migrant

living for younger generations. Furthermore, MEPT5 recounts the continuation of

migrant living and focus on helping family throughout their high school academic career:

Yes, we actually traveled every year since we got here from California; back in

the 90s all the way to almost 2001, until I went to college. So, yeah, we would go

up north to Michigan and follow the crops or we would travel here within the

county, mainly Myakka, Myakka City. I think DeSoto County. Yeah, we would

follow the crops, go to the farm.

As a result, MEPT5 found "education", or meaningful life lessons, in all aspects

of academic and social encounters. Whether through experience with social mobility and

family migration or participation in extracurricular activities by way of the academic

setting, MEPT5 went from a state of survival to a thriving and promising future through

the means of secondary MEP education.

MEPT7 shared a commonality with MEPT5: Both were migrant farmworkers,

and both settled with their families in the county by way of the migrant education

program. MEPT7 recalled the events pertaining to their educational and career path:

I was a migrant student myself so, I can remember, since I was young, we would

migrate—travel back and forth. So, I remember being in the schools and it was

sixth grade when my parents were going through an Adult Migrant Program here

in the area, in Hillsborough County. And so, they helped them find a job here in

Plant City and that was the last year we migrated. You know, sixth grade through

when I graduated, I was no longer moving but I was always around the migrant

students because that was the group I was growing up with. When I graduated

[from college], I had the opportunity to work with the Adult Migrant Program.

Another factor regarding the lived accounts of MEP educators and their

postsecondary educational experiences is their high level of independence and

uncertainty towards academic goals and career pursuits. MEPT1 candidly shared her

bewilderment pertaining to the college-level academic system:

Starting at [college], I would have to say that I was kind of like—'cause when my mom…that year that I graduated, my mom would still go up with my siblings to Michigan. So, I was basically on my own at [college]. I was learning, basically, everything on my own and did not have someone who said, "Hey, you should do this and this," or "Maybe you chose the wrong major," kind of thing. So, there was really no one like that. So, I had to navigate the system on my own.

Due to the scarcity of resources, lack of background knowledge, and familial support cognizant of the college experience, secondary migrant students express their fears about pursuing postsecondary education to MEP staff. Migrant students who go further in their educational pursuits after graduation are often the first to attend college in their family. Without the affirming notion that they will have adequate financial and emotional support, MEP educators face a great level of discouragement and other challenging emotions from their students. MEPT1 accounts for how she was able to move forward regardless of the difficulties she faced through her own college experience:

Believe it or not, at that time, I did not communicate with my mom because I didn't have the luxury of a phone, a house phone. So, it was just like, "Oh." Somehow, we met each other but it was very rarely. When I went to USF, I can tell you, I did not come back to be with my mom or my siblings. It was like, "I'm already on my own."

MEPT7 also uses her students' admissions of fear as a "teachable moment" and a time to share her point of view with students: "I'm able to sit there and tell them, [the college experience] is scary. It's confusing. It's not easy. You know, all of that, and kind of walk them through it."

Upon further questioning, MEPT6 clarified how she "walks" her students through the college inquiry process in the MEP classroom setting:

Helping them with the financial applications, you know, scholarship applications. You don't know what you want to do? It's normal. It's okay. The most important part is you're going to go. You're going to do something. You know, you're going in there. It's just confirming that their fears are normal. They are not the only ones that are feeling this because I felt it myself.

An advantage to the MEP and the teacher's ability to cover a wide range of material is due to its structural makeup. It is a supplemental program that supports the reinforcement of skills and methods or best practices to bring about increasingly positive academic grades and outcomes. Flexibility was a shared component that many MEP teachers expressed as helpful in their mission to work daily with students. MEPT4 asserted:

Since I'm not in the classroom full-time, it's flexible. We don't do just core classes; we do tutoring. There is a variety of other stuff that we do; so, it's flexible. At the beginning, I used to have a teacher's aide and I was by myself. So, I was focusing on tutoring and credit recovery. Then, my aide would focus on the social work and the other stuff. But as years passed by, we had to adapt to change, as always.

Each migrant teacher has a different style and strategy that allows them to meet the demands of their migrant student caseload. Fluctuations in the caseload and the number of migrant students on campus differs between early October and the end of April. MEPT5 shares his method for managing time with students:

It's pretty much, like, an office-based deal. It's like a guidance counselor working

with just our students. Right now, I have 72 so far but eventually I'll have, like,

85 probably. And, they are my main focus.

The other male participant, MEPT2, echoed a similar belief about working with students in the MEP classroom:

I tutor all subjects. So, if a student comes in and they need help with science, then

I take out the science book and that's what we work on. But there's no lesson

plans that we create for those subjects because our role is to supplement

[learning].

These positive interactions with teachers and students forge excellent and long-lasting relationships over time. MEPT1 shares what her guidance counselor's effective approach meant to her overall academic plan:

…it was my guidance counselor, basically. The one that was saying, "Okay,

you're going to graduate. Let's sign you up for USF. Let's sign you up for

financial aid." I was fortunate to have her in my life….

MEPT7 further highlighted how talks with her secondary migrant students assuages their fears and builds their confidence towards pursuing postsecondary career options. In fact, she gave an account of a former student who contributes to the overall success of her high school MEP students:

And, he is a student that graduated from FSU in business. He's here now. Since

he graduated from high school, he has always kept me informed, updated me on

what he's doing. He's been so successful, and I've brought him back to speak to

our group of students.

MEPT5 also shares his personal story of how education brought him to the MEP sector:

I didn't have a clear picture in my mind of how and where I wanted to go. My parents would always advise us to focus on education and that it was really important and going to be good for our future, and careers, and jobs. And obviously, I paid attention. I did it.

He further indicated:

Eventually, I saw education being the one area in which I could focus and I had a couple of teachers that would come back and advise me or make a suggestion that I would make a good migrant advocate. So, I gave it try.

Change agency. The first step to cultivating change in the MEP within a secondary school setting is through demystifying, challenging, and eradicating faulty perceptions about migrant education. The failure to differentiate an MEP student from other specialized populations, such as English Language Learners (ELL), Exceptional Student Education (ESE) learners, and immigrant children can reinforce negative stereotypes and cause unnecessary harm and shaming to a migrant youth's self-esteem. Consequently, MEPT6 shared her simple yet profound approach to redefining what a migrant student is:

People need to understand that being "migrant" doesn't mean being "immigrant." It is completely different. So, right away, when you say "migrant," they say, "Do they speak English?" They're born here, you know. So, like, last year, out of 80 students I had at the highest point, only four were not born here. Two were from Mexico and two from Guatemala. "Okay?"

MEPT6 continued to indicate how a lack of knowledge regarding the population served in the MEP often produces generalizations that are echoed inadvertently amongst stakeholders:

So, it's like they don't understand that. Right away, "Do they speak English? Are they ESOL?" No, they may not be ESOL or they don't know. "They need extra help." Many of them are gifted. Many of them are gifted. They have straight As. Of course, I do push them a lot. I have very high expectations for my students.

MEPT6 concluded that MEP teachers must continue to reinforce what a migrant student is and is not to school administration, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to maintain the dignity and respect of the marginalized youth. MEPT6 succinctly explained the definition she often uses in school emails: "'What is a migrant student?' They don't understand the definition. A migrant student is somebody who migrates from state to state to work in agriculture. That's it."

By redefining and reintroducing the population to others who work and interact with migrant students every day, MEPT1 highlights the goal of change agency in and outside of the secondary migrant classroom. This effort demands the ability to collaborate with colleagues from other departments which span across various disciplines, curriculums, and subject matter. She expresses her reflective nature and thought process:

And, I always want to reach the student and help out the teachers as well because they are the ones in there teaching them. So, we'll send out, or teachers will reach out, "Hey, I think this student…." So, I think what I've learned from working with migrant students is, like, just to better myself to help them. What resources can I find? What worked? What didn't work? Because there are some things

that I say, "I shouldn't have tried that." Or also, when I have a student that did not succeed, that I did not do so well with, then I say, "Okay, What could I have done better to have reached that student?"

Some participants, such as MEPT5, have personal ties to the community which serve to motivate them to do more as an agent of change:

Yes, my actual first job with Hillsborough Public Schools was a migrant advocate at a high school, a local high school. That's kind of where I started to get my experience. I was just thrown in. I had recently graduated from college and we had over 300 students that we had to advocate to with just an aide and myself. So, it was a great learning experience for me because it was quite a big number and I knew it was going to make a great impact with that many students.

Furthermore, MEPT5 shares:

One of my main goals or main reasons to focus with migrant families and migrant students is to make a difference in the Hispanic community here, locally, where I grew up and where I came to school and where I was brought up. So, I can somehow--it's kind of like planting a seed in the students so they can know that anything that they think about becoming, studying for, or majoring in down the road, that at least that person that they can do it.

Yet, regardless of the community ties teachers of the MEP hold within their organizations, they must be able to maintain a healthy, effective, and proactive relationship with their student population. It is especially true within the MEP classroom because it is not a traditional core class or elective. It is often classified as a resource

classroom and attendance is optional. MEPT2 clarifies why developing strong bonds with students is essential to progression in the lives of MEP students:

> [Relationships and rapport] is what we run on because students don't have to come to us. Unlike classroom teachers, they don't have to report to us second period. They don't have to come see us at all. It's out of choice. So, if we don't build rapport, if we don't reach out and take the initiative, then especially at the high school level they just kind of float through the day and not seek any help.

When questioned how MEPT2 learned to build relationships and meaningful rapport with others, he declared:

> I've always had a desire to work with the Hispanic community. Right after I graduated from undergrad, I went straight into community development working with dropout prevention for Hispanic students. I've always had one job or another working with Hispanic students, whether church-related or through education.

As the conversation continued with MEPT2, the question was posed concerning his choice for centering his career in education around the MEP. He replied:

> So, the reason I have been teaching at a school with predominantly migrant students is…the obvious reason is that's the only place where these positions exist. We know that without it, without a high number of migrant students, we wouldn't have a migrant position at the school. So, I mean I teach there because that's where the job leads. Every year it could change; we could be placed at the school as the numbers change.

When MEPT2 was further questioned as to whether or not the factor of need was concerning, the participant replied:

Migrant students have high needs that require on-hand attention at the school

level, not at a central location somewhere where they have to wait. Unfortunately,

there are schools that only have two and three [students], and they do have to wait

until…one of the floating advocates gets there. However, I think the most

effective way to help is centralized staff at the school.

Language and communication services greatly impact the lives of migrant

families and students. The mere ability to communicate needs, concerns, and questions

can be quite frustrating for families who have little to no proficiency in the English

language. Many times, migrant students translate for the Spanish-speaking parents and

relatives. MEPT5 shared his concerns about language and communication from an

academic standpoint:

Another risk factor to the students would be language. Sometimes language is a

barrier for them; sometimes maybe a specific learning disability that isn't detected

on time. The student keeps going from elementary to middle school, and then I

get some of these students and they're, like, in third-grade level reading,

understanding. They, obviously, are not performing where they are. It wasn't

captured. They were just moved forward from one grade to the next. I think that's

one thing that could be a risk for students not performing on a high-school level

and are interested in graduating.

MEPT4 reinforces how language and the lack of communication can be

problematic for other pertinent areas of the migrant family experience:

They know about language. Many of them, the parents…they are illiterate. They

have zero education back in their countries. So, there's nothing that they can teach

the kids, like, to help them up. So, starting with that. I mean, um, poverty; They

live in very precarious conditions. Like, I'm telling you, like, "Oh, my God," you

say at the beginning; it surprised me a lot. Now I know what it's like; I've seen it.

I've seen it so many times but to this day…the other day, I had a senior that came

back from the North. He has cancer. He came back with a diagnosis of cancer and

he cannot finish [school] now. He has to focus now on his health and his

treatment.

Based on the Seven Areas of Concern in Migrant Education (OME, 2018), one of

the least acknowledged elements is health. The above example illustrates how many

assume social mobility to be the only component that presents issues for this population.

Another assumption is that only adults deal with health concerns. However, many

students present signs of fatigue, restlessness, anxiety, hunger, and malnutrition when

present in the academic setting. The quick responses of MEP teachers and other vigilant

teaching professionals to attend to these basic needs often change the course of a migrant

student's day.

The caring and renewing nature found within all the participants can be attributed

to their experience of watching students struggle to maintain a sense of normalcy as they

constantly move from one place to another. These periods of transition are often marked

with a family's dearth of resources, such as items for personal hygiene, bedding, food,

and clothing. MEP teachers act as social workers and are constantly seeking out resources

for the betterment of their children in the classroom as well as those in the surrounding

MEP community.

Social responsibility. All seven participants believed that their job required them to maintain a high level of social responsibility for the migrant students and families they served. MEPT1 shares how teaching accountability and a willingness to explore new opportunities begins with the teacher modeling such behavior first. Additionally, MEPT1 suggests being present and reflective of one's process while working with stakeholders is essential to creating change in the cycle of migration, poverty, and education. Migrant educators have specialized workshops and trainings that often allow them to know how to respond to families in crisis situations. When asked about the common misconceptions and risks that are taken by migrant families each day they travel, MEPT1 asserted her personal feelings about the current Response to Intervention (RtI) protocol:

And the stability of the students would also have to be factored into [RtI]. And now we're going to go into the status of the parents. In order to add that into the RtI, we would have to go into the mentality and be realistic of how our families survive, where they feel in a place that they're not wanted. So, welfare, social welfare…belonging.

MEPT1 continued to suggest that the responsibility carried by the migrant teacher advocate is a great one and must be examined frequently. In fact, MEPT1 declared the following assertion about her social responsibility to all stakeholders invested in Migrant Education Program: "I'm being the change I want to see." She further explained how her upbringing allowed her to remain empathetic to the emotional struggle parents and students may feel as they overcome adversities associated with their migrant lifestyle: "When the students come in—and it has to go back to relating to my childhood experience—being a migrant myself, when we would move things, we would not have a

stable place." Through her shared experiences with her students, MEPT1 expressed a deep commitment to keep the challenges of her students a priority in their educational institution.

Similarly, MEPT3 recalls a quick and powerful lesson she shared with her students regarding the importance of recognizing life's patterns: "Look back; these are the things that have happened. If you don't make certain changes or try to affect a change, it's probably going to happen again." By highlighting the vicissitudes of life, students are gradually able to make a connection about the changes they will inevitably face as they proceed on their educational journey. MEPT3 felt it important to prepare her migrant students for the challenges they will encounter along the way.

The dedication it takes to remain a teacher advocate in the Migrant Education Program is quite a daunting task. Nevertheless, MEPT2 shares the magnitude of his personal conviction to the role of a secondary MEP educator:

Being Hispanic myself, I didn't grow up poor or struggling because of the sacrifices and efforts my parents and grandparents made but I've always learned to appreciate what I have. One of those things is being bilingual and having an education. Recognizing that Hispanics also have the highest dropout [rate], I have a responsibility to give back. Especially being Hispanic, given the resources that were given to me, being bilingual, being bicultural…understanding mainstream culture, Hispanic culture. So, I felt it was an important part to give back all that was given to me.

All in all, MEPT2 believed his current role as an MEP educator is "…an extension of what I've always enjoyed doing which is working with Hispanic students."

However, there is a sense of responsibility that calls for more than social action alone; it is, indeed, a personal duty. This form of social responsibility is readily present and heavy on the hearts of MEP teachers.

MEPT4 shares a story of how being accountable is not only about advocacy, it is about spreading awareness to non-MEP stakeholders who do not understand the grave and treacherous conditions migrant youth inhabit every single day:

> Then comes winter, and they don't have a heater. And, those trailers are paper thin, so they are not well sealed, so you get those drafts. I mean, living conditions, you have no idea how many kids are sleeping on the floor. And, they go to you, to our school, and the elementary school, to here, and they sleep on the floor, on the trailer floor. I mean, those are things, people—I don't know if they don't know. It's just, sometimes I think it's just, like, the biggest secret kept. It's a secret out loud but no one's listening.

MEPT4 continued to give an account of her sick student's battle with cancer and the responsibility she has towards him:

> And I went to his house to bring some things that got donated for him and a trailer? I mean, a patient of cancer? And, when I walked in it was like an oven in the trailer. I mean, you can—if you put one of those air units in the window, but they—I mean, the owner of the camp—they won't let you put more than one and you can only run it a couple of hours. It's not like it can run all day. So, it was very, very sad for me because I wanted to get him an A/C right away.

MEPT5, a former migrant student and farmworker, reverberated MEPT4's message of poor and dangerous living conditions:

Another thing would be living conditions as well. Through my experience growing up and traveling to different cities, Michigan state and following the crops, number one, you might not have A/C. You may not have heat when the cold comes in. You might not have the amenities inside the housing and it's probably going to be shared. Kind of like a camp, showers are outside. Restrooms are outside and the whole neighborhood, it could be like twenty houses, they're sharing three different facilities.

Moreover, MEPT5 recalled his routine after long days in the field and school:

Going into shower after work or whatever, same thing for restrooms, it would be shared. For some, you might have a mobile home just for your family; on some, you might have all the amenities already there. But, sometimes, housing could be a little bit of a difficulty for the families. And, also, the number of people living in the house, that could be another issue as well.

Additionally, along with health and social issues outside of school, MEP teachers are often responsible for providing the supplemental academic services needed to secure migrant students' high level of success in the classroom. Eventually, MEP teachers desire for their students to become confident enough to independently demonstrate self-advocacy and critical thinking skills. While some students are more comfortable with these attributes, MEPT4 shares her experience of how valuable time is in developing these traits. She expresses her feelings of futility when there is a time restraint or the program's objectives are not a high priority in the academic setting:

But, sometimes, in reality, parents ask, "What can you really do for me?" "Well,

I can get your child free lunch for sure because you're part of the Migrant

Program. I can help you get certain services. I can help your kid out with tutoring

on occasion. But, other than that, I don't have that much to give you." We don't

really offer them enough.

When the researcher asked MEPT3 to clarify why she believed the program

inadequately serviced families at times, she replied:

So, by the time the students finish with their lunch, we have, like, five minutes to

do [tutoring]. What can I really do in that time? It kind of frustrates me because

the Migrant Program is evaluated on if the kids are proficient in FSA (Florida

State Assessment). Any kind of tutoring I might do during school is to generally

to get the kids to pass the class or get a project done or help them with whatever it

is. How is that affecting their FSA score?

Consequently, MEPT3 expressed the futility of standardized testing as it is linked

to the MEP's student learning gains and teacher evaluations. MEP teachers are

responsible for instilling self-advocacy and critical thinking skills in the migrant student's

academic process. In MEPT3's opinion, her responsibility to supplement the educational

needs of her student's work in core classes is paramount; nonetheless, she has often felt

her efforts are limited and rushed. It is imperative for teachers to not only feel socially

responsible but for educators to feel empowered to change the narrative in their students'

lives. Stories like this one often lead to teacher burnout and ineffectiveness. Many times,

when not addressed, teachers often feel compelled to walk away from the educational

profession with a vast amount of knowledge only to leave a void in the sector they once occupied.

Nevertheless, migrant educators often remain for many years in this sector of education because of their personal devotion to enhancing and altering the lives of those they teach. They build the confidence, ability, and mindset of their students by helping them learn to believe the goals they set in the classroom can be achieved in real life. MEPT5 is resolute in his belief:

> That's my main goal: to focus in the migrant community so that the students, my students, can actually help Mom and Dad step out of that same cycle and start a new cycle with their own families down the road.

Themes of academic experience. From an academic standpoint, six out of seven participants agreed that their initial academic pursuits were not rooted in the desire to teach. Nevertheless, each of the six participants moved to education through the state's Alternative Certification Teaching (ACP) Program which allows non-education majors to pursue a career in education and, ultimately, become a state-certified professional educator. The seventh participant attended college and obtained a degree in education from Cuba. Furthermore, none of the seven participants believed the postsecondary education they received directly prepared them for working in the classroom. However, each one expressed that their college experience allowed them to build skills and gain exposure that would prepare them for managing time, adapting quickly to new situations, and apply newly learned concepts in practical ways. Two out of the seven participants felt they experienced a lack of support whether from an advisor or immediate family during their college years. Due to these experiences, participants felt the need to adopt a

parental role and act as a guide for students; this element served as a motivator for two teachers.

Another academic motivation expressed by the participants involved a lack of diversity and exposure in their postsecondary education programs. Three of the seven participants believed this motivator greatly contributed to their current emphasis on challenging MEP students to pursue postsecondary education while exposing the migrant youth to a variety of fields, scholarships, and grant opportunities. In this sense, the participants act as a facilitator, counselor, and advocate. MEP students are urged by migrant teachers to become proactive in seeking opportunities that help them excel academically after high school. By challenging students to use their voice, set goals, and demand better for their future, MEP teachers are able to instill confidence and hope in the minds and hearts of their secondary migrant youth.

Table 3 illustrates common themes associated with the personal experiences of MEP secondary educators in a rural classroom setting.

Table 3

Thematic Findings: Personal Experiences of MEP Secondary Educators

Themes	MEPT1	MEPT2	MEPT3	MEPT4	MEPT5	MEPT6	MEPT7
1.Parents actively encouraged current educational/career path	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Attributes serendipity to current role and impact	X	X	X	X		X	X
3. Adverse interactions for being in a MEP teacher role			X			X	
4. Believes professional role has prompted personal growth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Expressed belief of Hispanic cultural background increasing MEP effectiveness	X	X		X	X	X	X
6. Satisfied with current MEP status, progress, and role	X	X		X	X	X	X
7. Personal experience with migrant lifestyle helps with MEP position	X			X	X		X

Note: MEPT = Migrant Education Program Teachers

Personal perspectives. The following admissions are based on the successes, faith, values, and beliefs, along with the first-year experiences of the seven MEP study participants. The findings are based on common themes found in Table 3, as well as their perceptions of the MEP role and their lived experiences. The consensus of responses from MEP teachers about their personal experiences have been positive and insightful; their wealth of knowledge has allowed this county's vast number of migrant students to be served for a number of successful years. The following accounts are responses concerning their goals, values, mission, and feelings regarding their first-year teaching experiences.

MEPT2 revealed his feelings of achievement within his MEP classroom:

I think some of the examples have been the students, especially at the high school

level. This is my fifth year of high school, five years at the middle school. I think

it's easier to see success at the high school because there's the end goal of

graduation. So, I would say seeing students who look like they wouldn't make it,

seeing students come back and thank me, parents that thank me, thank us for

helping students graduate—that's the biggest measure of success.

MEPT5 also provided a perspective on what he values when he works with his

students and families:

One of the main things I normally do when I have a new family, working at the

high school level, I introduce myself. I also share my story to the families so that

they know my background and know that I know what I'm talking about. The

students hear it out as well. I also make suggestions to the students that they also

need to help out and assist the same way [I did when] I grew up and helped assist

my parents with working in the fields and help bring bread to the table, chipping

in. And it's not that they're going to have to get paid for it; it's just part of it, you

know? That's how I was brought up.

It is evident that his personal experience deeply impacts his devotion to the school

and student population. MEPT5 and MEPT7 both share the experience of teaching at the

same school they graduated from while in the Migrant Education Program. Their spirit of

gratitude, pride, and reciprocity to the school, staff, and MEP population is constantly

refueled by their positive memories and appreciation for what was once bestowed upon

them: a quality education and chance to break the cycle of migration in their family line.

MEPT5 further indicated:

> I believe the families and the students keep returning back to our area for—
> number one—because I believe they really see I care for their students and the
> students really see I care for them as well and I really want the best for them. I
> pretty much tell them that I want for them what I want for my kids. That's what I
> want for them.

Additionally, MEP teachers recount vividly their first-year teaching experiences.
Most of the participants reported their first classroom teaching moments as being initially
overwhelming and discouraging; however, all reported how these emotions dissipated as
they saw progression and promise in their students' academic and personal lives. MEPT2
recalled the initial teaching experience as cumbersome and tedious: "Straight out of the
ACP (Alternative Certification Program) program, they gave me three preps. It was
middle school: I had Geography, Reading, and Language Arts, first-year."

The participant also shared:

> It was a rough start; many long days at the school after the students left. So, that
> was the first year. Starting the second year, I was just straight ESOL and resource
> at another school and then the second half of my second year [of teaching], I
> started in Migrant Education.

When further asked if this change motivated the participant to stay in education,
the reply was "yes." The teacher's ability to find purpose in his work ultimately resulted
in a deeper commitment to serving the migrant youth within the program.

Another participant, MEPT7, relayed how serendipity played a major role in aligning her with her current position: "Once I got older and I had the opportunity to work with migrant students, I don't know, it just attracted me. I just kept thinking, 'This is what I want to do.'" MEPT7 reviewed her earlier experiences and how they connected with what she now fulfills every day in the MEP classroom:

I was a Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Outreach Worker which meant for the State of Florida. I was going out and talking to some of these migrant and seasonal farmworkers and saying, "Hey, there's an opportunity to work here and it might break you from that migrant and seasonal farm work. It might stabilize you and get you at a state of work and a job, you know." I was doing that job and I was connected with the kids from the migrant program and the two roles just worked together.

It was her belief that time revealed her true purpose of working with migrant youth: "The more that I studied and was in the field it just confirmed that that's what I wanted to do. That's what I was happy doing."

As with many first-year teachers, the difference of learning educational theory in Alternative Certification Program (ACP) classes versus actively working in the classroom with actual students can cause great anxiety on the part of the new teacher. Everything from learning names, taking attendance, managing behavior, teaching the lesson, answering questions, and differentiating instruction can make one quite befuddled. MEPT3 admitted: "My first year of the Migrant Program, I went home and cried for the first two weeks, too." Although MEPT4 expressed she, too, shed tears after her initial days of teaching, she replied: "It was meant to be. It was meant to be. It wasn't like I

planned it like this and I studied and I looked for the Migrant Education Program. I didn't even know it existed."

MEPT4 had previous experience working with the geriatric population and teaching computer literacy. She stated the transition from working with older adults to secondary migrant youth was easy to do. She expressed her joy for working with a variety of different students:

> We have everything: We have those kids that you would want to clone them, you would want to multiply them because they're so bright, and then you have the others in the middle, and then you have the ones in high need.

But according to MEPT4, the initial teaching experience wasn't always easy to accomplish: "[My first-year teaching experience] was scary. It was scary, and many times I ended up crying. [Laughter]. And then the evaluations and the observations…it made me really doubt myself a little." All in all, she admitted looking back after 13 years of teaching only in Migrant Education: "It made me grow as a person, as a human being. I love it. I love education; I love when the kids get it."

MEPT6 expressed joyfully her inclination to becoming an educator as a child. Unlike the other participants, MEPT6 is the only participant with a degree in education: "I always enjoyed teaching. Since I was little, I would always play that I was a teacher and I just really enjoyed teaching and sharing knowledge, in general, with everybody. I just love it."

Similar to MEPT6, MEPT7 shared how mesmerized she was by the daily routine and duties of her MEP teachers:

It was so amazing how there were these professionals helping these kids. I

remember sitting there looking at her thinking, "I want to do that! I want to do

that when I grow up. I want to come back here and do that." I even thought that.

She went on to add:

I just love it. It helped that I was a migrant student myself; it helped me, you

know, identify with these kids and know what they're going through. You know,

it's scary going to a whole new school, and they're so different. So, that's pretty

much how I've been around the migrant population all my life.

MEPT7 believed, very much like MEPT5, that she was called to educate the

students of the MEP program. In fact, she shared how many educators and peers inspired

her to seek out more opportunities to work in education:

I think it was just always in me. Maybe I didn't know it, you know, but it was,

like, I was just intrigued. I liked the helping others and helping my community

and the group that we would travel with and those students. And in high school,

I'm grateful for the migrant program that would give us the opportunity to—okay,

if they found a student that was strong with one area, "Can you help this student?"

with peer mentors and things like that.

Over time, MEPT7 found her niche in the MEP classroom and often volunteered

her services as a peer mentor to support other students:

I remember going into the peer mentor room not actually needing any help but

because there was always someone you could help there. I remember liking the

teacher role, you know. It was like, "Oh, let me help you with this."

Although this has not been a primary focus of the study, some MEP participants revealed their belief for thriving in their career as a credit to their personal faith and, for others, the notion of serendipity. According to MEPT2, faith was the driving force behind his vision, mission, and goals with MEP youth:

> I have a lot to offer the students. My passion, my drive is by my faith. It's not strictly professional, but I believe that God has given me a lot. He's blessed me. To me, what I do is an extension of my faith. I'm not a teacher who's a Christian; I'm a Christian who's a teacher.

In addition, MEPT7 indicated similar beliefs for her decisions that ultimately led her to the MEP setting: "God is looking out for me; this is what I want to do."

Moreover, two veteran MEP teachers, MEPT4 and MEPT6, reveled in their success of promising students excelling in the migrant education classroom. MEPT4 stated: "[Migrant education] was something that was, like, God sent. It was like a plan." In turn, MEPT6 expressed:

> I couldn't have picked a better job in my life. I'm just so glad that God chose me to teach them because I just, I just love my students. I love being around them; I just feel so blessed to be able to be there for them and to teach them everything that I can. And, anything and whatever they need.

Connection to professional life. Any educator would most likely express difficulty in being able to separate their personal lives from their professional career in teaching. Indeed, many teachers find themselves fulfilling roles and responsibilities well past work hours. Nonetheless, MEP teacher advocates find it increasingly challenging to

detach from their MEP families because of the social services aspect of their career. MEPT7 shared her passion for meeting the needs of every student, every time:

> It confirmed that I liked working with the high school kids. I liked helping them figure out, you know, what they wanted to do with their life. And then, it was, you know, the challenge came when you have those students that just want to give up because they're like, "I'm behind. I'll come in," and working with them, connecting with other states and saying, "What do we need to do to graduate this student?" That, to me, was very fulfilling. I just felt happy, you know. I love this, and I love my job. I mean, even when we're off on holidays and summer, I'm eager to go back.

Along with passion for the students and the field, MEPT7 declared the need for lifelong learning and a growth mindset amongst MEP educators: "I will say, I mean, there is always room for growth. I mean, with the students, you know you were part of making a difference in their life."

> Finally, MEPT5 spoke to the vision it takes in order to allow students to thrive in academic excellence throughout the secondary education path:

> If they have a dream in them, then they can make it come true. All they have to do is nurture their mind, grow their mind and their intelligence, and it's up to them to put up the effort and actually go for it and make it happen.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 4, the data and findings revealed themes regarding the lived experiences of secondary MEP educators in a rural school setting. As a result, Table 4 shows common themes of each migrant educator concerning Research Questions 1 and 2.

Table 4

Migrant Education Teachers' General Statements of Experiences in a Rural Secondary School Setting

Participant	Participant's Statements
MEPT1	Hold MEP students accountable for their learning
	Lack of structure in first years of MEP position
	MEP teachers must implement differentiated instruction
	Discipline and student rapport are essential for student learning
	Educator must create structure and be a model for success
MEPT2	Previous career impacted and improved current role as educator
	Providing access and exposure to new opportunities is essential
	Facilitation and coaching are the main aspects of MEP role
	MEP teachers "bridge the gap" for MEP students and families
	Affected by social/economic disparities in educational system
MEPT3	Students perform academically at higher levels than anticipated
	Promotes students to evaluate patterns to avoid future mistakes
	Appreciates flexibility and social service aspect of position
	Recognizes students for resilience and strength in all areas of life
	Believes MEP is still time-restricted in its ability to give services
	Mischaracterization and ambiguity of MEP advocate role
	"Compassion fatigue" can result due to multiple roles over time
MEPT4	Poverty affects students' perceptions of attaining academic goals
	Teacher must address social/personal concerns for student success
	Veteran MEP educators are resilient, yet affected by students' lives
	Student relationships are developed over time with consistency
	Flexibility of the position allows for more holistic view of students
	Health, language, and living conditions impact student outcomes
MEPT5	Believes teacher should expose youth to opportunities/scholarships
	Contributes teacher success to former experience as migrant youth
	Teacher is a facilitator, encourager, coach, and guide to students
	Promote lifelong learning, self-advocacy, and positive thinking
	Hold students accountable for supporting personal/family needs
	Living conditions and social mobility increase danger for students
MEPT6	Empathy is a key component to working well with MEP youth
	Sees misconceptions and lack of understanding with MEP harmful
	States MEP student success stories are not widely reported enough
	MEP teacher role requires caring and parenting influence
	MEP services interrupt continuation of poverty and migration
MEPT7	Parental support can greatly influence positive student outcomes
	Parents want to help their migrant children but don't know how
	Prior work and migrant experience help current educator role
	MEP teacher must demystify postsecondary options for students
	Listening, along with rapport building, is essential for position
	Educate traditional, non-MEP faculty/staff for greater support
	"It takes a village" mentality needed to make MEP successful

Tables 5 and 6 focus primarily on the personal and professional themes based upon the motivators and challenges experienced by the MEP educators in the secondary school setting. In Table 5, the high-frequency areas included the teachers' high level for social responsibility as well as their proclivity for promoting lifelong learning and knowledge sharing. For mid-frequency areas, the findings indicated the participants' previous lived experiences as a migrant worker or family member or their prior work experience as a servant leader. The low-frequency motivator found in the results pertained to a specific and significant lived experience which affected the participant because there was a lack of diverse and/or inclusive factors promoted. The themes' scale for the MEP teachers' experiences was as follows: low = 1 - 2, mid = 3 - 4, and high = 5 - 7.

Table 5

Thematic Findings: Motivators of MEP Secondary Educators

Themes	MEPT 1	MEPT 2	MEPT 3	MEPT 4	MEPT 5	MEPT 6	MEPT 7
1.Experience as a migrant family member or worker	X			X	X		X
2. Former professional work experience promoted servant leadership		X		X	X	X	
3. High level of social responsibility	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Mentioned an experience with a setting lacking diversity and/or inclusion		X	X				
5. Proclivity for lifelong learning/knowledge sharing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: MEPT=Migrant Education Program Teacher

In Table 6, the data explains the common themes faced as challenges by the MEP teachers in a secondary school setting. There were no high-frequency areas listed in the data. Mid-frequency issues within the MEP teacher set of challenges included creating structure in the MEP classroom as a new teacher, the initial challenge of handling multiple MEP-related roles, and demystifying the purpose and mission of the MEP classroom to non-MEP stakeholders. Low-frequency issues pertained to believing needs of MEP students and family had been met, remaining creative and effective as an MEP teacher along with the experience of teacher burnout or "compassion fatigue." Additional low-frequency indicators included maintaining consistent parent involvement and clarifying the definition of MEP student to non-MEP colleagues. The themes' scale for the MEP teachers' experiences was as follows: low = 1 - 2, mid = 3 - 4, and high = 5 - 7.

It should be noted that although other topics could be considered low-frequency issues, this does not disqualify them as not being a greater issue for other participants. On the other hand, it is important to note some issues were not deemed important to the teachers. In Chapter 5, future research topics will be discussed under the section titled, "Recommendations for Future Research." Moreover, the relationships that do not correlate with the relationship questions will be summarized. Limitations, delimitations, recommendations, and a conclusion for the research study are provided on the role and lived experiences of the secondary MEP educator.

Table 6

Thematic Findings: Challenges of MEP Secondary Educators

Themes	MEPT 1	MEPT 2	MEPT 3	MEPT 4	MEPT 5	MEPT 6	MEPT 7
1. Adequately meeting needs of MEP student and family population			X				
2. Creating structure and developing a unique approach as new MEP teacher	X	X	X	X			
3. Remaining creative or effective as a MEP teacher			X				
4. Teacher burnout and/or "compassion fatigue"			X				
5. Initial difficulty handling multiple MEP teacher roles	X	X	X				
6. Demystifying the purpose and mission of MEP to non-MEP school stakeholders	X		X	X		X	
7. Maintaining consistent parent involvement		X			X		
8. Clarifying the definition of MEP student to non-MEP stakeholders						X	

Note: MEPT = Migrant Education Program Teacher

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, an overview of the study will be discussed as well any outcomes and limitations presented within the findings. The major sections of this chapter include: implications, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion. The focus of the study was to explore the lived experiences of migrant education teachers to increase knowledge and understanding of the secondary MEP classroom and their contribution to it. As a result of the phenomenological research study, further insight was gained about the perspectives of professional educators currently practicing cultural pedagogy in the rural secondary school setting.

Cultural pedagogy is an underlying yet essential component found in today's diversely populated classrooms. In fact, Gay (2010) states that culturally responsive teaching disrupts the educational status quo; it calls for developing the intellectual qualities within people of color rather than forcing them to abandon their identity for the sake of learning new information. Trapped in a world between traditional student and immigrant, migrant youth are neither. Migrant youth are often born in the United States yet they are unable to gain adequate access to support, resources, and services in the educational system. Valenzuela (1999) reinforces this concept with the crisis faced by children who are disassociated or de-identified as immigrants, thereby, hindering communication and rapport building from establishing healthy norms for students who already are challenged by issues related to social mobility. Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2009) contends that when teachers are unwilling to acknowledge and actively address

the racial and ethnic differences of the children they teach, they are limited in their scope and ability to meet their academic needs.

Implications of the Study

Moreover, the necessity for clear and effective communication with parents has been proven to improve relationships and program outcomes in the Migrant Education Program. In a study conducted by Coady, Davis, and Flores (2008), *personalmente,* or the use of home-school communication, aided MEP educators as the only group consistently rendering communication in nontraditional ways while using the families' home language. Through outreach and nontraditional forms of communication, specific advocates within MEP provided academic tutoring, school-related supplies and materials for the home, as well as assistance with sociocultural concerns. It should be noted that key stakeholders were identified as the ones responsible for serving through the MEP in this respect. While most parents do not readily seek out help to clarify concerns or questions regarding school materials or other paperwork, MEP individuals performing this role would be a great benefit to the students, the school site, and surrounding community of migrant families.

Additionally, once a consistent path of communication between the school and the home has been established, MEP teachers can embolden their role of community outreach and reinforce their *personalmente* with migrant families and students. Moll et al. (2001) assert the importance of retrieving funds of knowledge (FoK) from migrant families to make a stronger connection with students and the community through shared language, terms, and concepts. In other words, this approach takes the knowledge, skills, and abilities of migrant families' households, builds a network in which they can

exchange and thrive, and interconnects their social environment through the exchange of social and economic enrichment. Delpit (2006) reiterates how the repetitious monitoring of language in a restrictive learning setting often causes a student to lose their will to speak and voice their perspective. However, by integrating familiar language and household practices within the MEP classroom, the threat of compromising one's identity for education is decreased. This method mirrors cultural pedagogy and its distinct quality of acknowledging that students are already full of knowledge when they are initially approached for instructional purposes. The same idea is applied to parents being the first "teachers" and MEP staff working with them in order to connect newly learned concepts at school to established practices in their homes. The utilization of FoK should permit reliable communicative conditions for a holistically student-centered setting.

Technology also allows MEP educators to have a greater impact with migrant students, parents, and other stakeholders essential to the goal of academic success. Its significance in personalized learning promotes more comprehensive learning experiences and renders opportunities for collaboration between teachers and students (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2016). Social media in particular is an effective method which is commonly used in the traditional classroom. As a result, the MEP classroom should also make use of devices like iPhones, iPads, cell phones, and other technological tools to instill best practices for student engagement and increased communication amongst stakeholders. To improve communication while migrant youth travel from state to state, platforms such as virtual learning sites and other educationally-centered social media sites may help combat the issue of social mobility being a deterrent to the success of the migrant student. A model of teaching and learning through the

Internet via mobile and technological devices would greatly enhance the ability for students to receive a consistent and dependable delivery of education while migrating. Vincent (2013) asserts that the negative effects of social mobility, such as separation, isolation, and lack of connection, are decreased due to the greater use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by the migrant population. Although many students can use PASS, the Portable Assisted Study Sequence, to study during the school year, more research is needed in regards to how migrant students may benefit academically, socially, and emotionally with migrant teachers as a result of using other educational technology platforms during the migratory season.

Another way MEP teachers should infuse technology in the classroom is through the practice of storytelling. Although storytelling does not necessarily require technology for implementation, digital storytelling increases students' ability to express themselves through written and verbal communication while demonstrating mastery skills in technology. Vocke (2007) points out that students benefit from experiencing the English language in real-world application by developing and sharing their personal voices, beliefs, and perspectives through digital means. Through the use of storytelling and social media, students would enhance their ability to use technological resources with MEP educators who supplement their educational needs.

In turn, Ladson-Billings (2014) explored the power of culturally sustaining pedagogy which pushes the limits of traditional cultural pedagogy and seeks not only African American voices and identity, but global identities in various disciplines, such art, music, literature, media, and sports. Migrant teacher advocates must expand their limits of how to identify, reach, and captivate the student in the learning process. One of

the most compelling parts of teaching is allowing students the permission to share one's

true identity and grant them the permission to use their voice. Esteban-Guitart and Moll

(2014) expand on the idea of funds of knowledge (FoK) through funds of identity (FoI)

which gives rise to a person's ability to bolster their identity through the defining,

expressing, and understanding of the self. From these activities, migrant teachers would

be able to emphasize and develop a point of view of how they matter in existing social,

economic, political, and cultural systems. Storytelling and other appealing activities that

promote healthy, truthful dialogue, such as Socratic Seminars (a roundtable discussion)

and Philosophical Chairs (a structured two-party debate), would encourage students to

challenge their current ideas and stretch their learning capabilities to defy what they often

believe as factual truth.

   Nevertheless, these forms of teaching and learning can only take place in an

environment which fosters authentic and caring relationships evident of respect, integrity,

and admiration for all stakeholders. Gay (2010) asserts that although the methods of a

caring teacher may differ, one factor remains true of all: Successful teachers establish and

maintain high expectations without compromising the idea of high achievement. In the

secondary migrant classroom, no option but graduation would be given to those who are

being served. Regardless of current living, social, or financial conditions, social mobility

and all its deterrents would need to become second to the ultimate goal of completing

high school and pursuing postsecondary school and/or career options.

   Secondary migrant youth are very much aware of the MEP being a supplemental

resource class they are not required to attend. Valenzuela (1999) expresses caring and

pedagogy as one in which a teacher finds balance between rigor and flexibility, relevance

and discovery, education and enlightenment; students want to be able to make a connection between academic knowledge, work skills, and real-world application. Students ask: "Why does this matter to me and how can I use it in my immediate future? How will this break the tedious cycle of migration my family and I face? How can I maximize my potential and reach postsecondary education with such skills?" Essentially, the role of the MEP teacher is to provide information that will help the migrant student ultimately answer these questions for themselves, take ownership of their newly formed decisions, and forge ahead upon their bright and promising futures.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations the researcher chose to implement were deliberate in an effort to maintain the integrity of the study. During the study, the researcher consciously chose not to visit teachers at individual school sites. Instead, the interviews took place at two public library locations rather than on district properties. Moreover, the researcher scheduled all interviews with teacher participants prior to the influx of migrant students arriving from northern cities, which takes place between late September and early October. Not only did the researcher believe it would be too cumbersome of a responsibility to keep track of pertinent information, times, dates, participants, and meeting sites, but it would possibly interfere with the availability of the participants as well. Based on the phenomenological approach applied to the study, teacher interviews were deemed time consuming because of the lengths of the interviews, expressed lived experiences, transcriptions, and follow-up meetings to check transcripts. The population was not a diverse group; as a result, the researcher chose the first seven potential candidates who met the criteria for the study. Nevertheless, the study does represent the

district's MEP teacher population well as the entire department is comprised of less than 15 educators.

Implications of the Findings

For the rest of Chapter 5, the purpose will shift to discussing implications regarding the MEP teachers' responses. The two research questions will be evaluated.

Research Question 1. What are the lived experiences of Migrant Education Program teachers?

Research Question 2. How do hardships adversely affect migrant teachers' teaching processes and professional outcomes?

The focus of this study was centered on the personal, academic, and professional perceptions of active Migrant Education Program teachers in a rural secondary school setting. The study attempted to explore teacher motivations and approaches to cultivate learning and promote success toward migrant youth. Additionally, it sought to reveal issues which would prompt future initiatives and research that may help the voices of MEP teachers be heard, acknowledged, and regarded as a mainstream and relevant group of professionals in the educational field. Participants in the study varied in their level of professional experience as well as their lived experiences from different geographical locations. Collectively, the participants considered major and minor events throughout their lives as important contributions to their perspectives on education and roles as migrant teachers. Although responses were diverse due to the perceptions of the participants, each had a great understanding of the MEP classroom and what qualities were essential to thrive within it.

The participants believed that having strong interpersonal relationships with school administration, non-MEP teaching colleagues, other educational staff, as well as MEP students and parents alike were helpful for program effectiveness and academic success. Six out of seven participants stated the MEP offered a sufficient amount of services to the MEP families they served but one also felt there was a lack of time and resources provided by the program. Even though migrant education teachers can transfer knowledge and resources in an academically-led small-group setting or one-on-one format to their MEP students and families, it is perceived by one participant that value should be added to a more holistic and thorough approach for one-on-one learning.

In addition, it should be noted that four out of the seven participants shared that a primary task associated with their position was to demystify the purpose and mission of the Migrant Education Program. The participants indicated the rapport between those in the MEP classroom and non-MEP colleagues led to a more positive experience in the secondary school setting because they felt there was an increased level of support on their campus to meet MEP initiatives compared to the one participant who felt unsupported. This participant felt their school administration often minimized their program's efforts and provided minimum support. An equitable, collaborative, and caring environment, along with one-on-one interactions with students, are instructional best practices which allow MEP teachers to meet program initiatives and professional goals. The crucial balance of time management, classroom obligations, community outreach, and work-related initiatives, cultural pedagogical approaches and philosophies increased positive professional outcomes of MEP teachers.

Previously, MEP teachers had to adjust to state initiatives to succeed. However, the emergence of Title I MEP programs promoted by Congress allowed states to gain a great amount of flexibility in creating state education agency programs, thereby school settings have since changed their approaches for teaching, learning, and outreach (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Services and program initiatives that encourage the awareness of cultural competency and focus on needs and concerns of migrant students should be implemented to promote student success (Free et al., 2014). A variety of efforts employed by MEP teachers that related to successful program outcomes included:

- Connecting migrant students with faculty to foster healthy student-teacher relationships and student success.

- Providing academic, career, and college advising to students to help them become independent learners.

- Securing educational opportunities for career planning.

- Developing online initiatives to introduce students to postsecondary options.

- Utilizing technology to complete secondary education requirements.

- The implementation of such resources in the MEP classroom not only allow for the continued engagement of students, but the professional and personal development of migrant education teachers.

Teacher motivation is a necessary component for creating, retaining, and sustaining momentum for challenging, as well as compliant, students. With this in mind, the role of an MEP teacher must always be reinforced with the idea that it is their duty to motivate, stimulate, and challenge the minds of the students within the secondary migrant classroom. By a teacher accepting the task to balance the use of both intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation for continuous student engagement, best practices for teaching can be used to maximize student success and academic performance. In a MEP classroom, there are a number of ways to reach students, such as specific praise, teambuilding, storytelling, establishing norms and procedures, and allowing students to take ownership of their classroom with rules developed by the migrant youth.

Motivation of students can differ based on the societal, cultural, economic, and political norms found in a particular setting. In fact, the MEP has a distinct culture of its own and often is viewed by students as a place to reconnect with familiarities in language, customs, and beliefs. Outside of the MEP classroom, many students feel overwhelmingly stressed about their environment and ability to maintain their true cultural identity. At times, migrant youth believe success in school means a divorce and derogation of their cultural ties and pride within their community (Valenzuela, 1999).

Teachers in the migrant education sector often understand these nuances and implicit beliefs in a school organization and are aware of ways to combat this faulty thinking on behalf of their student population. Nevertheless, MEP teacher advocates emphasize positive traits attributed to cultural pedagogy. Elements like scaffolding lessons to maintain a high standard for academic success, reshaping curriculum to highlight the students' funds of knowledge and celebrate home life (or cultural background and related nuances), as well as cultivating students' social and critical consciousness by making them aware of power relations all play a key role in manifesting an increased level of belongingness and acceptance with migrant youth (Sleeter, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Implementing these factors causes confidence to increase amongst the MEP student body, resulting a greater level of productivity, momentum, and

success for MEP teachers. Positive intrinsic motivations improve the outlook of cultural and attitudinal perspectives of the migrant teachers in the school organization as well as the students in the MEP classroom.

Based on the motivational components of the migrant teacher, instructional methods and approaches used to plan interactive lessons with students can greatly affect the responses of MEP youth. One example of this is in the MEP teacher utilizing a small-group instruction approach for multiple students seeking help in a particular subject. Not only does this reinforce the standard of learning that is expected and sustained by MEP teachers in the secondary classroom setting, but it also conveys a clear message to MEP students in terms of how they should perceive and value their school, their education, their teachers, and their personal academic goals.

In the secondary MEP setting, teachers should provide immediate feedback, maintain a positive learning atmosphere, and give specific praise for student achievement. Migrant students appreciate teachers who support them with immediate feedback because they are able to receive and apply the newly learned techniques and skills rendered by the MEP teacher in a variety of courses. Moreover, the dialogue between a teacher and student fosters the learning process, helps students to organize their thoughts, and brings recognition to their progression in the MEP and traditional education classrooms. The use of constructive criticism should be used to highlight areas which need improvement or have cause for concern. MEP teachers will also be able to use this tool to identify faulty patterns of learning which may inhibit the student from growing in a particular academic skill or area.

Although five out of the seven participants expressed a lack of program structure or time constraints as an issue, MEP teachers continued to express their commitment to providing student instruction, guidance, and support. Regardless of the experiences faced by migrant educators, the researcher determined that the major area of concern was social mobility. As mentioned earlier, social mobility is comprised of and affected by the MEP Seven Areas of Concern: (a) school engagement, (b) English language development, (c) educational support, (d) instructional time, (e) educational continuity, (f) educational support in the home, and (g) health (OME, 2018). Although these concerns are usually applied to the migrant student and families, they are very much applicable to the role and lived experiences of the secondary MEP teacher as well.

School engagement is an essential element to sustaining the viability of the MEP classroom and teacher advocates' initiatives. All school stakeholders in the secondary school organization must be willing to become knowledgeable of program objectives, trends, and issues. Familiarity with regards to the unique MEP yearly schedule, or the influx and waning of students in the year, should be communicated to enhance awareness amongst non-MEP faculty and school administrators. It is the researcher's belief that migrant teachers should participate in an assortment of trainings and professional development opportunities available to all teachers (e.g. classroom management, differentiated instruction, Kagan strategies, SpringBoard curriculum trainings for English and math, continuing education courses, ESOL trainings). Implications provided by this study add to the thought of higher student success and program graduation rates through an increase in professional and social interactions within the school organization.

Harding's Standpoint Theory (2001) explained that marginalized individuals within a workplace setting tend to differ greatly in their social positioning, and not necessarily perspective, from those of others based on where they are situated in an organization. The conceptual theory suggests that knowledge is based on one's point of view. In other words, MEP teachers may share the organizational goal of graduation and academic success for all students yet they may have a completely different method for how their students will achieve those goals based upon their scope of knowledge. Additionally, the theory suggests such persons are at a great advantage because of their social positioning in an organization. Their unique perspective is equally important to the whole group. The more positions present in an organization gives rise to more standpoints which can exists within it. Not only does this develop a rich and intricate culture to the organization, it can also create a very diverse one. Such settings call for an inclusive culture; consequently, each voice must be deemed important, heard, acknowledged, and respected for its views.

The low-frequency themes to be discussed are from all seven participants. Commonalities within themes are always present in any research study. However, there are themes which are shared by individual participants as well. It should be noted that the researcher was limited by the small sample size of this qualitative study, thereby, a larger sample size of MEP teachers may have presented more findings in any area of the research.

Limitations of the Study

Phenomenology is the explanation of one's direct experience in a situation or setting (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Although the researcher was able to conduct a

districtwide research study comprised of secondary MEP teachers, the number of educators was limited due to the small number of teachers in this sector of education. Additionally, the interviews were not conducted in the participants' native language. All interviews were administered in English which is readily spoken by all participants including the researcher. Even though the participants are all fluent in the English language, speaking in one's native tongue may have increased the depth and thoroughness of their responses. Furthermore, the researcher was limited to interview protocol questions and a minimum amount of probing due to the nature of a phenomenological study. The reliability and validity of the questions was also limited. Unlike the study participants, the researcher did not share the same culture nor ethnic background. Consequently, the study was limited to only individuals of Hispanic or Latino descent. Nevertheless, the study did include both men and women although the number of women exceeded the men by three participants.

During the interviews, the researcher had to question the seven participants with a consistent approach. Yet, probing was also used at times to enhance the understanding of the participants' experiences. The frequency of themes ranged from low, medium, and high—as noted in Chapter 4—and were based upon the responses of the teacher participants. Future research topics may be compiled through analysis of Tables 2-6 in Chapter 4.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a professional educator, the researcher suggests more analysis to be completed with regard to teachers within the Migrant Education Program (MEP), specifically those of non-Hispanic descent. The district and various MEP sites in secondary school settings

are given extra time to include planning for various ventures within the educational framework. This allotted time could be used to develop a viable action plan to allow rural secondary MEP teachers to organize how they can better support migrant youth who are in the classes. Workshops and meetings related to this effort could serve as a platform for MEP teachers to create a healthy dialogue and create solutions for issues that consistently present themselves while teaching migrant students.

This particular group of teachers all held positions in traditional K-12 classroom settings and were only responsible for serving migrant students at their school site. Yet, although this may seem very simple, migrant teachers do much more. Free and Kriz (2016) postulated that migrant educators do more than provide education; they also support and empower students and families to challenge their current scenarios by providing supplemental education, providing emotional support, navigating through school protocol and procedures, as well as equip students with knowledge to promote self-advocacy, racial equity, and social justice in their homes and communities. Furthermore, it is recommended that more research be done in early childhood education and Pre-K sectors of migrant education, as well as with the OSY (Out-of-School Youth) student populations.

Even more so, it would be beneficial to know the role and lived experiences of the MEP teachers who work diligently in these areas of education. Many studies have sought to enhance the instructional methods, strategies, and approaches that are made within language and reading instruction. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research that pertains to the emotional, social, professional, and personal dynamics involved with teaching these specific groups of migrant youth. In fact, Hill and Hayes (2007) asserted

that out-of-school youth are more likely to speak less English, live away from parents, have children themselves, and have higher poverty rates than those of in-school migrant youth. The majority of research has focused on the Spanish-speaking community as a way of uncovering prominent issues in the field of migrant education. However, cultural pedagogy, which is often used to examine this phenomenon, calls for the analysis of educating a variety of people of color with multiple perspectives. As a result, it is the researcher's recommendation that further exploration should center on how migrant education and cultural pedagogy intervenes in the lives of other people of color who may be underrepresented or underserved due to their social standpoint. Language and communication, the use of technology, storytelling, and the need for cultural pedagogy in the classroom should be utilized to further enhance the productivity and advancement of the MEP setting.

In addition to the discussion of cultural pedagogy, intersectionality is another trajectory of thought that can be utilized to examine the roles and lives of migrant teachers. Comparative intersectionality strives to study the factors that continuously affect certain persons as a result of their race, gender, age, position, or social standing. For example, Esnard and Cobb-Roberts (2018) investigated the role of Black women professors in higher education from the United States and the Caribbean as they endeavor upon the tenure process. In their study, the participants' roles and lived experiences were discussed to reveal the challenges and triumphs of finding their voice in an institution which did not readily celebrate their success nor student population: the higher education community. Comparatively, future research may be able to apply such a study to the lived experiences of migrant teachers and other educators of marginalized youth.

In general, teachers of marginalized students often feel somewhat ostracized or diminished as well. To further understand the difficulty of finding "success" as a secondary migrant educator, this study may serve as source of information to provide the language, concepts, and possible trajectories needed to extract what commonly occurs between other underrepresented minority K-12 educators and those in higher education. The need for research in the areas of race, equity, and migration through the guise of marginalization, diversity, and inclusion would further support the discourse of marginalized educators and their students.

This study was able to exemplify the challenging role, lived experiences, and perspectives of migrant education program teachers working in a rural secondary school setting. Not only did the teachers face a significant number of obstacles while serving migrant youth, their parents, and the surrounding community, but they have also continued to leave an indelible mark on the classroom, culture, and overall state of their educational institution (Free et al., 2014). Although this study revealed migrant education program teachers exceled in providing services and advocating for their students in the midst of great challenges, it is still extremely important to address the issues they often encounter. By confronting dilemmas directly, the likelihood of successful outcomes is increased. Consequently, the recommendations of this study are geared toward MEP teachers, administrators, non-MEP educators, researchers, as well as the community and other educational stakeholders. It is thereby recommended that this study enhance efforts to improve the role, policies, capacity, and impact of MEP teachers in the secondary educational setting.

Currently, the services offered by MEP teachers often lack essential elements needed to meet successful outcomes due to a decreased access to capital, specialized trainings, resources, and professionals. Due to this insufficiency, there are many obstacles faced by teachers in the MEP. As a result, improving the range, accessibility, and influence of offered services will cultivate the subsequent steps to achieve success as an MEP educator. In fact, Vocke et al. (2016) discusses the importance of MEP directors collaborating to innovate new strategies and pathways to increase migrant teacher effectiveness and student success, especially during the summer months. The continuation of services throughout the year contributes to graduation rates and a higher likelihood of attaining postsecondary options for MEP students. Along with the essential collaboration of MEP leaders and other related stakeholders, the acknowledgment of culturally responsive teaching and the correct implementation of such practices should be reviewed to ensure the cultural gap between MEP leaders and MEP families decreases (Gabriel et al., 2017).

It should be noted that there is a necessity to advance the knowledge of best practices and effective strategies associated with cultural pedagogy in the delivery of MEP services. In addition to best practices that are effective and appropriate for the MEP classroom, consideration should be given to the development of common and more consistent delivery of services and instructional measures within core curriculum. This is due to many programs within a given state varying widely with regard to their "…focus, services, and instruction offered, and opportunities for credit accrual…" (Vocke et al., 2016).

It is also recommended that proven technological methods be implemented to increase and sustain communication and instructional delivery for MEP teachers to migrant youth and families. With the rise of technology as a mode of communication, MEP has been able to offer more educational options for student learning. However, there are still many issues that hinder credit accrual and student access to curriculum from state to state. Furthermore, many teachers in the MEP remain limited in their ability to access reliable and accurate records, communicate with students during migratory transition periods, and guarantee students will be able to retain high school credit achieved from one state when they migrate to others (Vocke et al., 2017). Ultimately, this has an enormous impact on a student's ability to achieve the needed requirements for graduation. Due to these issues, it is recommended that school administration take an active role in clarifying to parents, faculty, and staff any policies that affect migrant youth (Green, 2003). By developing techniques that will improve the flow of communication for recordkeeping, instruction, and advocacy, it will promote the decrease of inconsistent practices that hinder the overall effectiveness of the MEP.

Many discrepancies within the evaluative data for MEP can have grave consequences: With students and parents, negative and irresoluble academic outcomes may take place whereas data findings may be considered unreliable if attention is not given to MEP teachers and other educational stakeholders' effectiveness (Vocke et al., 2017). It is imperative to ensure MEP teachers, students, and families receive proper and adequate attention necessary for support, resources, and guidance from their organization, as well as other sectors of the educational community. Free et al. (2014) indicate that although migrant teachers are constantly advocating actively to ensure the needs of

students are met, a continued measure of assistance from the public is needed. It will be essential to ensure educational and community stakeholders from primary and postsecondary sectors of education respond readily to secondary migrant education and its numerous issues as they are key indicators of a more widely spread problem in America's socioeconomic, political, and race relations. The influence of such discourse will provide answers for major issues currently affecting the MEP.

Accordingly, Aronson and Laughter (2016) declare that teachers' voices are more effective in voicing the empowering and effective force culturally relevant pedagogy has on a community's understanding and concern towards promoting social justice in education. With society's increasing awareness of the migrant life, the great toll it has on migrant families, and the indomitable spirit of migrant youth, MEP teachers can shed new light on how this sector of the education promotes equity, empowerment, and a level of social change and consciousness that penetrates deeper than the educational system.

Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2016) suggest the presence of a counternarrative, or storytelling, being an effective tool to voice the "truths" of underserved communities and marginalized groups. MEP teachers have the ability to amplify their voice and the issues concerning their student population by sharing their professional experiences to enhance the response towards migrant education. Free et al. (2014) indicate the need for school environments to be sensitive to the needs and hardships of migrant youth as many MEP students do not readily communicate with teachers about problems they may face in and out of the school. Thereby, it is recommended that MEP teachers continue to serve as change agents through the use of storytelling to provide greater insight to the current trends and issues affecting the MEP population. Ladson-Billings (2016) and Free (2014)

both declare policy changes in our society will only be established through the continued work of teachers and other educational leaders clearly articulating the real circumstances of underserved youth. Nevertheless, it is recommended that storytelling and other methods of advocacy be implemented "…not just as a defense strategy but also as a way to unmoor people from received truths so that they might consider alternatives" (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 42).

To conclude, it is recommended for MEP teachers to receive continued support through the use of networking. Through a strong network, their professional roles and personal lives will be cultivated in a variety of enriching ways. Stakeholders, such as their professional colleagues, administration, and immediate family members, may serve as members of the group. In fact, Brookfield (2017) asserts that teacher support networks enhance the skill of critical reflection which promotes the use of critical rationale, discourages professional "self-laceration," and allows for teachers to remain emotionally grounded. Continuous interaction with other empathetic colleagues and stakeholders is imperative to managing challenges they may encounter throughout their professional careers. With the knowledge of migrant teachers' multiple roles, tasks, and responsibilities, teacher support groups will alleviate many negative issues migrant teachers face on a daily basis.

Conclusion

Migrant education programs in the United States should continue to progress towards implementing cultural pedagogical practices in the rural secondary school setting. It is up to MEP teachers and administrators to enlighten and continually inform district personnel, school administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students about their

purpose, mission, vision, and objectives in serving a diverse and deserving population: migrant youth. Stakeholders should be held accountable for learning, enhancing, and maintaining a high level of awareness towards the competencies that surround current trends of diversity, inclusion, equity, justice, and leadership.

The participants of this study demonstrated extreme comfort expressing cultural competence with the researcher while engaged in the interview. Consequently, it will become necessary for educational institutions interested in progressively highlighting their MEP departments to redefine MEP teacher advocates on their campuses and view them as unique and prominent teacher leaders. The cultural competencies, as well as initiatives to promote diversity, must be present in the school's culture, curriculum, and creed. Secondary school institutions will need to address and continually welcome dialogue that provides keen insight to those of various cultures, genders, religions, and backgrounds to collaborate on key issues. Moreover, these educational organizations will also need to extend to their MEP student population the appropriate resources needed to succeed in secondary education courses. With the constant change and influx of new trends, educational stakeholders should stay equipped and proactive in their ability to address challenging matters relevant to migrant youth and the Migrant Education Program. After all, the fortunate ones are the educators who are able to transform young minds and cultivate a love, respect, passion, and art for learning through the implementation of culturally relevant teaching in a MEP classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

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Appendix

Interview Questions for MEP Teachers

Appendix: Interview Questions for MEP Teachers

(Questions were modified from the study by Valerie Fields)

1. Tell me about your professional and cultural background. (RQ 1)
2. How did your upbringing and academic experience as a child affect your role as an MEP professional? (RQ 1)
3. Why did you decide to become an educator? (RQ 2)
4. How did your postsecondary educational experience shape your focus as a teacher in the Migrant Education Program? (RQ 1)
5. In what ways did your postsecondary schooling attribute to your approach with MEP students? (RQ 2)
6. Did you initially begin teaching migrant students? Describe your first-year teaching experience. (RQ 1)
7. What were your reasons for teaching in a school predominantly with migrant students? (RQ 1)
8. In your opinion, have you found success as a MEP teacher? If so, what are some examples? (RQ 2)
9. What are some key issues you have encountered being a migrant teacher? (RQ 2)
10. How did meaningful relationships and rapport help manage challenges within the MEP classroom? (RQ 2)
11. As you reflect on your career as a migrant educator, what have you learned about yourself and your students as a teacher in a rural high school setting? (RQ 2)