

The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program: A  
Narrative Inquiry Approach

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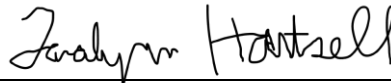
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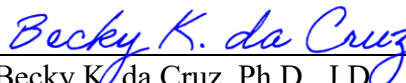
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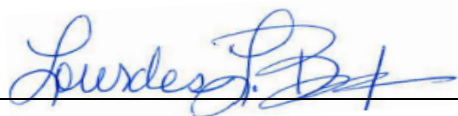
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## **ABSTRACT**

The qualitative study explored how the migrant students characterized their experiences in the CAMP program at a predominately White institution in the south and how they formed their identity development and self-authorship. Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship served as the framework. Participants developed their identity and established self-authorship as migrant students due to the influences and impacts of CAMP. The migrant students perceived CAMP support as the nexus to their academic success and overcoming barriers. Discussed are the implications for higher education and future research.

Keywords: CAMP, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, migrant students, identity development, self-authorship, predominately White institutions, qualitative approach

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my children, Evan, Ean, and Ileyana; my first grandchild, Isabella; and my best friend and loving partner, Antonio. Thank you for your love, understanding, and unconditional patience. I hope to continue to inspire you and serve as an example that all is possible with the divine grace of God.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Children from migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families are the most disadvantaged of all groups of students in the United States (Ramirez, 2012). They are marginalized and have abundant socioeconomic (Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018; Peterson, 2014) and academic obstacles (Garza, Trueba, & Reyes, 2016). MSFWs are among the poorest groups and have the lowest socioeconomic development (Araujo, 2011). In the United States, migrant students experience many barriers that inhibit their educational and economic opportunities (Zalaquett, McHatton, & Cranston-Gingras, 2007). Migrant students experience academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009; O'Connor, Mancinas, & Troxel Deeg, 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007). A step towards understanding and planning for college services is to investigate how migrant individuals perceive the university environment, as well as and their experiences as college students.

Historically in American society, higher education has been a key to transformative social mobility and improving economic status (Cranston-Gingras, Morse, & McHatton, 2004). A postsecondary education degree is valuable for individuals to secure better job opportunities and move up the social and economic ladder. Attaining a baccalaureate degree is significant to improving migrant students and their families economic and social status (Zalaquett et al., 2007). However, the educational sacrifice and journey to postsecondary education can be challenging for

many students (Araujo, 2011; Bordes & Arredondo, 2005). To reduce the adversities of low-income students' financial and prevalence of their academic struggles, improving and gaining access to postsecondary education is crucial. Urbina and Wright (2015) emphasized the significance of transforming and redesigning the American educational system to be empowering and prosperous for all students:

As the United States strives for positive social transformation in the global era, it is the historically troubled educational system that reveals some of the deepest-rooted social problems in society, as the educational system is the front-line for empowerment, opportunity, and success, and thus one of the most significant upholders of democracy, opportunity, and transformation. (p. 4)

The above quote demonstrates how education can better shape our society and make a difference in students' socioeconomic development. Some scholars believe that the disparities in racial and ethnic representation within higher education are due to a lack of academically prepared students (Rodriguez, 2015). On the contrary, the journey of underrepresented students towards a college education illustrates a disenfranchisement that occurs as a by-product of society through which those who lack economic and educational resources also lack access to higher education. Among this group are low-income, first-generation, and underserved students, including the migrant population.

Migrant farmworkers are one of the most disregarded and underrepresented groups in the United States (Bail et al., 2012). There are an estimated 2.5 to 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers currently working in the United States (National Center for Farmworkers Health, Inc. [NCFH], 2020). There is a lack of information

about educational programs designed to serve and assist migrant students and track their postsecondary progress and outcomes (Nuñez, 2009). Many scholars have written about Latinx and immigrants' experiences in higher education, but there is limited literature on migrant students' pursuit of attaining a college degree (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009). Few college students in higher education research come from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds (Araujo, 2011). The present study addresses the dearth of research on the migrant student population's college experiences and makes meaning of their experiences.

### **Demographics of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers**

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are a vital source of labor and are essential to society in the United States (Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018; Peterson, 2014). Migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families are mobile and seek temporary or seasonal employment across the country during different times of the year to cultivate and harvest crops (Georgia Department of Education Migrant Education Program [GaDOE MEP], 2017). The production of crops is labor-intensive, demands manual labor, and the working conditions are undesirable (Culp & Umbarger, 2004).

News journalist Edward R. Murrow reported on the migrant farmworkers' poor living and working conditions in a television documentary entitled "Harvest of Shame" (NCFH, 2020). The CBS network aired the Harvest of Shame documentary on Thanksgiving in 1960 to increase the public's awareness of the migrant workers' social and economic disparities (Friendly, Lowe, & Murrow, 1960). The documentary highlighted the families' desire for better economic and educational opportunities and aired their stories. It revealed how MSFWs lived through disparaging living conditions

and working environments. In the interviews, the reporter encouraged migrant workers and their children to share their personal experiences to learn about their backgrounds and dismal life. Observing and filming the migrant students' stories in the documentary illustrated a greater awareness of the need to provide educational programs to assist migrant students.

According to the Department of Labor 2015-2016 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), the individual MFSW's annual income ranged between \$10,000 to \$19,999, and their annual family income ranged between \$20,000 and \$29,999 (NAWS, 2018). The 2021 poverty threshold for an individual is \$12,880, and the poverty threshold for a family of four is \$26,500 (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [ASPE], 2021).

A significant number of MSFWs were born in foreign countries (U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service [USDA ERA], 2020). Approximately 32% were White – non-Hispanic, 3% were Black – non-Hispanic, 2% were Other – non-Hispanic, 57% were Hispanic of Mexican origin, 7% were Hispanic or Other, and 45% were born in the U.S., including Puerto Rico (USDA ERA, 2020). The report also described how migrant seasonal farmworkers have the lowest educational attainment. Among the migrant and seasonal farmworkers with minimal education are Mexican origins (USDA ERA, 2020). The average grade level completed was eighth grade; 77% identified their primary language as Spanish, and they spoke little to no English (NAWS, 2018).

A total of 117,119 MSFWs and immediate family members may reside in Georgia at any time during peak growing and harvesting seasons (Larson, 2008). Migrant work activity differs depending on the season and may seek temporary employment in the

poultry processing plants, mostly located in Georgia's northern region (GaDOE MEP, 2017). The minimum hourly wage in Georgia is approximately \$11.71 (USDA ERA, 2020). Georgia ranked as one of the leading states in providing employment services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (Georgia Department of Labor [GDOL], 2017). The production of poultry, eggs, peanuts, pecans, cotton, tobacco, blueberries, and peaches in Georgia contributes significantly to its economy, and its agricultural industry consistently ranks first in the nation (Flatt, 2019).

### **Demographics of Migrant Students**

Migrant students are the most educationally underrepresented group of students in the educational system because they are highly mobile and have diverse linguistic backgrounds, creating challenges for the educational system to address (Georgia Department of Education Migrant Education Program [GaDOE MEP], 2016). Children from MSFW families experience low college enrollment rates in Georgia (GaDOE MEP, 2016). Approximately 96% of the MSFW population in Georgia is of Hispanic origin, and 77% of migrant students enrolled in kindergarten to 12th grade are eligible to participate in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program, which is an indicator of poverty (GaDOE MEP, 2016). The GaDOE MEP (2016) also reported 27% of Hispanic students enroll in postsecondary education in Georgia, and 9% earn a college degree.

Migrant students face several barriers to preventing college access or college degrees (Gonzalez, 2015). Students from migrant backgrounds often confront challenges in envisioning their academic identity, and they do not perceive educational possibilities within their future (O'Connor et al., 2020). Study habits, social and cultural adjustments are other factors that may prevent students from attaining a college degree (Urbina &

Wright, 2015). They are also more likely to require remediation before enrolling in college-level courses (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2020).

### **The Lifestyle of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers**

The lifestyle of MSFWs and immediate family members repeated moves to seek farm work imposes multiple barriers to their children's educational attainment and academic achievement (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students often experience a disruption in their education when their families move to find farm work; these moves significantly contribute to missing classes and getting low grades that set them back a year and a half behind in the curriculum (O'Connor et al., 2020).

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are among the most economically disadvantaged workers, socially and financially; nearly 33% of MFSWs and their families earn below the national poverty level guidelines (NCFH, 2020). Financial limitations and low income are some of the issues that can prevent migrant students' from pursuing higher education. The cost of attending a four-year institution is more than the MSFW family average annual income. The cost of attending a state university in Georgia, including room and board, is between \$9,000 and \$ 15,000 (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia [USG], 2021). College tuition is certainly an obstacle for migrant families.

Another financial obstacle for migrant students is the need to work and contribute to immediate family members' finances while attending college (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). Migrant students continuously confront challenges to earn sufficient wages to support siblings and their immediate family members. Due to



financial hardships, a student's ambitions to pursue an undergraduate degree program are challenging in light of family support (Ramirez, 2012).

An average of 19% of migrant and seasonal farmworkers reported that they completed the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades (NAWS, 2018). Migrant students do not have parents or relatives to serve as educational examples or provide parental guidance to pursue a college education. The lack of exposure to college-educated individuals is another barrier for migrant students. The educational journey and achievement of postsecondary education can be more challenging for the migrant student population. Often students succumb to the reality early in their life that higher education is not accessible (Nora, 2003).

Migrant students must be encouraged, inspired, and supported by those who understand their experiences and can serve as counselors, mentors, and role models while informing parents of the educational process (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). With the collected challenges, migrant students are less likely to enroll or complete their postsecondary education (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). There is a pervasive culture of low expectations of college aspirations, and migrant students often do not consider pursuing a college degree because they feel it is impossible. Migrant students have a lower rate of college enrollment due to their economic needs (Becerra, 2010). The challenges associated with educating migrant students and the comparatively low numbers of migrant students who pursue a postsecondary education warrant an exploration of the experiences of migrant students participating in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004).

## **College Assistance Migrant Program**

The Office of Economic Opportunity established the CAMP program as an initiative of President Lyndon Johnson Administration's War on Poverty (Araujo, 2011; Branz-Spall, Rosenthal, & Wright, 2003). As a result of the War on Poverty legislation, the United States Department of Education (U.S. DoEd) created the Office of Migrant Education (OME) in 1966 (Branz-Spall et al., 2003). The U.S. DoEd established the CAMP program in 1972 to serve students from migrant or seasonal farmworker families (The National High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant Program CAMP Association [National HEP CAMP Association], 2020). CAMP is authorized under Title IV, Section 418A of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 1965 as amended by section 408 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act P.L. 110-315 (H.R.4137) (U.S. Department of Education [U.S. DoEd], 2020a).

CAMP is a competitive five-year federal grant-funded project sponsored by the United States Department of Education Office of Migrant Education (U.S. DoEd MEP), to provide the academic and financial support necessary to help migrant students complete their first year of college and attain a postsecondary degree (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). The estimated range of the awards is from \$180,000 to \$425,000 per year (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). The U.S. Department of Education issue an announcement inviting applicants to submit a grant proposal for the CAMP project. CAMP projects are awarded to institutions of higher education (IHEs) or to eligible nonprofit private agencies working with institutions of higher education that meet the U.S. DoEd MEP criteria to provide a much-needed service to the migrant student population (Willison & Jang, 2009).

Recipients of the CAMP grant award met the project's required and defined U.S. DoEd MEP directives, providing a strong justification in their grant proposal for its programmatic and technical plan to assist migrant students. CAMP recipients must annually submit a Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) progress report to the U.S. DoEd MEP. The GPRA measures the percentage of CAMP participants enrolled in the program, the percentage of students completing their first year of postsecondary courses and are in good standing and will continue their second year of undergraduate studies (Willison & Jang, 2009). The GRPA reports use quantitative data to measure the CAMP program's objectives, benchmarks, targets, and actual performance (U.S. DoEd, 2020b).

College admittance is the first step for migrant students' undergraduate journey. CAMP support services and intervention programs assist migrant students in their first year of college with academic, personal, and financial support. The CAMP program serves over 2,400 migrant student participants annually (National HEP CAMP Association, 2020). Mendez and Bauman (2018) ascertained CAMP's dedication to increasing migrant students' college retention and promoting academic success. CAMP focus on recruiting high school migrant students to attend postsecondary education. CAMP provides assistance with college application materials and the Financial Aid Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA) application process. In addition, the CAMP program provides migrant students with financial and educational support, tutoring, counseling resources, English Language Learner assistance, and help migrant students obtain internships and scholarships (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Reyes, 2009).

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Migrant Education funded 17 CAMP grant programs in 2021 and 16 CAMP grant programs in 2020 to qualified universities and colleges throughout the United States (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). Currently there is only one established CAMP program in northern Georgia. University of North Georgia is the only university with a CAMP program serving migrant college students in Georgia's north region (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). There is no CAMP program between the University of North Georgia and the state of Maryland. The next CAMP program in the northeastern U.S. corridor is Salisbury University, located in Salisbury, Maryland (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Migrant Education awarded the University of North Georgia the first competitive five-year federal discretionary grant for \$2,123,775 to establish CAMP and assist the rapidly growing migrant population in north Georgia (U.S. DoEd, 2020b; UNG, 2020b). UNG received its second competitive five-year federal discretionary grant in July 2020 for \$2,125,000 (U.S. DoEd, 2020b; UNG, 2020b).

The UNG CAMP program serves 35 first-generation migrant students per year transitioning into their first year of college (U.S. DoEd, 2020b; UNG, 2020b). All migrant students accepted into the UNG CAMP program meet the qualifications for admittance, meet the eligibility income criteria and come from families with a combined annual low income or below the poverty level (U.S. DoEd, 2020b; UNG, 2020b). UNG CAMP participants receive assistance with federal financial aid, stipends, and scholarships to help reduce their financial burden. The CAMP's stipends also help the migrant students with additional costs such as books, school supplies, and personal expenses (UNG, 2020b).

## **Chickering's Theory of Identity Development and Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship**

The present research required specific theoretical lenses to describe how migrant students experience their affiliation with CAMP and how they formed their identity development and self-authorship in a predominately White institution (PWI) academic environment. Chickering's theory of identity development made meaning of the migrant students' intellectual, manual, and interpersonal competencies while developing their identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser's (1993) model of identity development specific to college students proposed that developmental tasks occur through seven sequential challenges, described as vectors or known as tasks. Chickering's theory of identity development seven vectors illustrates college students' development during their first year of college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The seven vectors contribute to the research questions on how migrant students' identities developed during their first year of the CAMP program. The framework of Chickering's seven vectors of student development provided an understanding of how CAMP students are developing their identity. It explored the seven vectors of competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity about their family of origin and ethnicity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

In the existing literature, researchers have considered the developmental process to examine the college students' journey toward self-authorship development (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship examined how CAMP students construct their personal growth and knowledge during the program. The

theory of self-authorship includes four unique phases of the college students' transition: (1) follow formulas and plans defined by others; (2) crossroads is the realization to establish a sense of self; (3) become the author of one's life and develop own beliefs; and (4) internal foundations to exhibit a sense of self and develop a comprehensive system of knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The theory of self-authorship makes meaning of the college students' transition from external influences to establish their internal influences and understanding of their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The Learning Partnership Model (LPM) illustrates how a support group can mediate college students with risks and challenges (Baxter Magolda, Creamer, & Meszaros, 2010) and understand the college students' development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The LPM explained how the migrant students manage to stay with the program as they develop their internal beliefs, identities, and constructions of their relationship with CAMP.

As demonstrated by existing literature, Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship are instrumental theoretical frameworks for the research focusing on CAMP migrant students. These theories are essential to guide the study.

### **Statement of Problem**

With the growing migrant population in Georgia (Atlanta Regional Commission [ARC], 2016), there is a need for institutions of higher education to address the issues with educational discrepancies and support comprehensive educational programs for migrant students to help reduce the educational disruption and other problems that result from MSFW and their families' financial limitations. For institutions of higher education

to better serve and address the growing migrant population's needs, researching the CAMP program and how migrant students perceive their experience is crucial and necessary to understand the support services of CAMP and their motivations to pursue a college degree. The state of Georgia's significant migrant population growth is worth studying to understand how the CAMP program influences migrant students' college experiences. Furthermore, the research is also essential to know how the learning community environment for CAMP migrant students assists with their identity development and self-authorship during college.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterized their experiences in the CAMP program at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south. In support of this study, Araujo (2011) addressed there was limited information about migrant students' experiences enrolled in college and CAMP. Further research is needed to investigate how CAMP impacts migrant students who complete the program and earn college degrees. The study results can significantly contribute to the literature on the CAMP program. The study focused on making meaning of the migrant students' experiences and shared their voices with pursuing a college education at the University of North Georgia. While developing the study, there was limited qualitative literature on the CAMP program and migrant students. There have been no qualitative studies at UNG on the CAMP program and the migrant students' identity development and self-authorship. The qualitative research provided an understanding on how people interpret, construct, and make meaning of their experiences (Merriam et al., 2002). Qualitative research is also appropriate for this study

to empower migrant students' voices by sharing their stories and understand their perspectives and experiences in a CAMP program at a PWI.

### **Significance of the Study**

As the migrant population has increased, there is a greater need for scholars to focus on migrant students' experiences as they navigate through higher education and pursue a college education (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). The challenges of migrant students' financial and academic struggles are prevalent. Despite these barriers, many migrant students can overcome adversities and earn their college degrees. Escamilla and Trevino (2014) highlighted that the CAMP program offered solutions, such as financial and academic support, to address some of the issues contributing to migrant students' retention and higher education enrollment. Students from migrant and seasonal farmworker families have deficits that prohibit completing an undergraduate degree program, and CAMP appears to have success in helping students achieve college graduation rates similar to non-migrant students (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Approximately three-quarters of the CAMP participants graduate with college degrees (National HEP CAMP Association, 2020). The CAMP program is significant in migrant students' pursuit of a degree by providing financial, educational resources, emotional, and academic support to assist them with their college endeavors (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2020; Reyes, 2009).

CAMP support and resources are some of the positive solutions for migrant students completing a degree (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The research explored



and shared the migrant students' voices on pursuing a college education and understanding their CAMP program experiences. The findings from the study may help the United States Department of Education Office of Migrant Education and the Georgia Department of Education Migrant Education Program with useful concepts to support educational programs necessary to provide services for migrant students. The study results could also significantly influence migrant organizations, institutions of higher education, and high school educators in guiding and promoting postsecondary education to migrant students.

### **Research Design**

Conducting qualitative research was the most appropriate for the present study using a narrative inquiry approach. Qualitative research was suitable because it is more flexible with the research design (Maxwell, 2013), and it investigated the experiences of migrant students participating in the CAMP program in north Georgia. The qualitative research for the present study contributed to the current quantitative studies on the migrant students participating in CAMP. While there are limited research studies about migrant students in higher education, most available studies on CAMP participants focus on quantitative research (Araujo, 2011). Merriam and Associates (2002) affirmed narrative research allows the researcher to discover how people understand their everyday interactions and perceive their individualized world.

Due to the scope of the research, the study utilized the narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry can make meaning of migrant students' personal, academic, financial, family, and cultural experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) termed narrative inquiry as autobiographical, in which participants told their stories and experiences.

Essential is to capture the stories of migrant students as they unfold to pursue a college degree and uncover daily life experiences, critical events, circumstances, and surprises (Patton, 2015). The migrant students also discovered how their CAMP program experiences had affected other areas of their education and personal lives. Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship guided the research questions. Chickering's theory of identity development, seven vectors, provided an in-depth understanding of how migrant students make meaning to the process of their identity development during their first year in the CAMP program. In addition, Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship examined how CAMP students construct their personal growth and knowledge during their first year in the program.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions served as a guide for the study.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

### **Data Collection**

Upon obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher completed the data collection through interviews with migrant students who agreed to participate in the study. See Appendix A for Valdosta State University's (VSU) IRB documents. Recounting narratives is a momentous way for individuals have made sense of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). The motivation for this study was to capture the migrant students' autobiographical stories, elevate their voices, and provide

awareness of their CAMP program experiences. Nevertheless, the most appropriate approach to retaining participants was conducting one 90-minute semi-structured interview. Participants reviewed and approved their interview transcripts to ensure data collection and analysis. Once the researcher received the participant's approval, the participant received a \$20.00 gift card.

The Director of the UNG CAMP program and the counselors were essential in getting their buy-in, support, clarifying logistics, and discussing any concerns. The researcher shared the study's purpose with the Director of CAMP and counselors. The study's disclosure and distribution of information, such as draft emails and consent forms, was provided to the Director of CAMP and counselors. The CAMP personnel were instrumental in distributing the recruitment email and study's disclosure to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and avoid non-compliant issues.

The selection of the interested participants relied upon their self-report responses. To qualify for the study, the participants had the following requirements: (1) CAMP students that have completed at least 12-credit hours, both male and female; (2) they must be first-generation migrant college students; (3) U.S. citizens or permanent residents; and (4) parents are seasonal or migrant farmworkers who have worked in the past 24 months in a migrant seasonal farm work environment.

Participants must be interested in the topic, available for the study, and willing to describe their experiences in-depth (Patton, 2015). The primary ethical obligation was to understand how the participants perceived the research and respond to their questions (Maxwell, 2013). The participants reflected on their experiences, unpacked their stories,

and gave in-depth meaning; for these reasons, eight participants were appropriate for the study. There are 35 UNG CAMP participants per year transitioning into their first year of college (UNG, 2020a). However, there is limited tracking of CAMP students who continue their education after the first year of college or complete their degrees (Araujo, 2011). Due to the limited number of CAMP participants at UNG, the small sample size was appropriate for the study.

### **Definition of Terms**

The basis for the study's definition of terms may be specific to the College Assistance Migrant Program. The following definitions apply to the present study.

*Asian.* A person having origins in any of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent includes, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

*BIPOC.* Is an acronym, which stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. BIPOC is significant in recognizing that systemic racial injustices severely impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

*Black or African American.* An individual having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

*College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).* CAMP is a federally-funded grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education. CAMP assists students of migratory or seasonal farmworker families enrolled in their first year of undergraduate studies. The program supports the completion of the first year of studies at an IHE. Services include outreach to eligible persons, counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance to

qualified students during their first year of college (National HEP CAMP Association, 2020).

*High School Equivalency Program (HEP).* HEP is a federally-funded grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education. Universities, colleges, and non-profit organizations nationwide administer the HEP program. HEP helps migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their immediate family members 16 years or older and not currently enrolled in school to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma. The goal is for the HEP recipients to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training (National HEP CAMP Association, 2020).

*Hispanic(s).* A term related to describing an individual or a group of individuals who are of Latin American descent or origin living in the U.S. The Hispanic term is sometimes interchangeable with Latinx to identify the same population.

*Immediate Family Member.* For CAMP eligibility, a migrant student's immediate family member means a spouse, a parent, step-parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, or anyone with guardianship. Any person who claims the prospective CAMP participant as a dependent on a Federal income tax return for either of the previous two years or resides in the same household as the prospective CAMP participant supports the migrant student financially and is a relative.

*Institution of Higher Education (IHE).* The term institution of higher education means an educational institution in any State that admits students and is a public or other nonprofit institution accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. IHE is legally authorized within the State to offer a program of education beyond secondary education and offer an educational program for which the institution

awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward a degree.

*Latinx.* A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

*Low Income.* Individuals in families with incomes below the federal poverty level bracket. All members of a family are assigned the same poverty status. Poverty thresholds are the same for the entire United States, despite differences in the cost of living across US communities.

*Migrant.* The definition of migrant varies across Federal government agencies and programs that provide services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The NAWS (2018) defined a migrant as an individual who reported jobs at least 75 miles apart or reported moving more than 75 miles to obtain a farm job during 12 months.

*Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs).* Principal employment is 51% of the time in agriculture on a seasonal basis and employed within the last 24 months (NAWS, 2018).

*Migrant Education Program in Georgia.* The purpose of MEP is part of Georgia's education system of continuous improvement to ensure that migrant students benefit from the same free public education and meet challenging academic standards to graduate with a high school diploma. The goal is to provide migrant students with the related educational needs to prepare them for further learning and employment (GaDOE MEP, 2017).

*Migrant Student.* A migrant student is defined as a child whose parent or guardian is a migratory agricultural worker and who has moved from one school district

or school administrative area to another during the regular school year (GaDOE MEP, 2017).

*Predominately White Institution (PWI).* PWI is not an official designation for any institution in the United States. PWI describes higher education institutions in which White students account for 50% or more of enrollment.

*Student Retention.* Retention rates are measured by the percentage of first-time undergraduate students who return to the same institution the following fall.

*Underrepresented Students.* The term underrepresented varies by field of study and occupation. For this study, the variations represent the migrant population as they are rooted in differences in high school graduation, pre-college courses, college enrollment, and overall educational attainment. The term also applies to the ability to earn family-sustaining wages.

*Underserved Students.* A term to define students who do not receive equitable resources as other students in academia.

*White.* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

### **Organization of the Study**

The organization of the study includes six chapters. Chapter one introduces the research and entails the theories, statement of the problem, purpose, the significance of the study, research design and questions, and the definitions of terms. Chapter two encompasses a comprehensive review of the related literature on CAMP migrant students and includes the conceptual framework. The literature review demonstrates Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship. This

chapter discusses how the two theories apply to migrant students who experience their affiliation with CAMP in a PWI. Chapter three describes the methodology for the qualitative study and the research location and discusses the data collection methods and data analysis procedures. Chapter four presents the research results and findings, including students' demographic data and narrative excerpts for each participant. Chapter five reveals the findings and explores the thematic analysis. Chapter six summarizes the study findings and conclusions drawn from the results, a discussion, and recommendations for further research.



## **Chapter II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, presenting an analysis of literature related to students from migrant and seasonal farmworkers families enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) remains essential. The paucity of research and literature regarding migrant and seasonal farmworker students' experiences enrolled in higher education and the CAMP program warrants the research (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). The study aimed to assemble information regarding the experience of first-generation college students from migrant and seasonal farmworker families participating in the CAMP program. The results from the study addressed a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterize their experiences in the CAMP program intended to assist students at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south.

The review of existing literature contributed depth to the research and examined the experience of migrant college students participating in the CAMP program in Georgia's north region. This chapter begins with the relevant literature by focusing on Chickering's Theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship related to making meaning for CAMP students (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The literature review entails Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) to describe the learning partnership between migrant students and the support from others, followed by literature on PWIs. The literature review includes studies that have examined migrant students' educational characteristics and barriers. It also includes studies that have examined the CAMP

program, how CAMP influences migrant students' college experiences, and the learning community environment for CAMP migrant students.

The qualitative research conceptualized the temporal, social, and situated narrative phenomenon of migrant students' college experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and explored a deep understanding of the migrant students enrolled in a CAMP program. The study utilized the narrative inquiry approach. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) defined narrative inquiry as collaboration and social interaction between the researcher and the participants. The researcher and the participants' collaboration and social interaction occur in a physical or social setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Applying narrative inquiry in the study helped frame the meaning-making process of CAMP students' experiences and share the developmental changes that affect their identity (Merriam et al., 2002).

Narrative inquiry captured the stories of CAMP students and illustrated their personal experiences to make meaning of their lived experiences. Although the reviews in the literature have found that the population of migrant and seasonal farmworkers is diverse, most migrant farmworkers are Latinx (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). In addition, due to the dearth of data on the enrollment of migrant students in higher education, the literature review identifies the majority of migrant students as Latinx (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). For the present study, recognizing that there is diversity within the migrant student population, information on attainment and experiences about Latinx can apply to migrant students in higher education.

## **Conceptual Framework**

According to Maxwell (2013), understanding that the conceptual framework is the researcher's interpretation or model of the study. It is an illustration of what to expect to find, defining the relevant theory of the phenomena of the study (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework connects all the components of the research process, which consists of the researcher's goals and study interests, values, views, context and design, and theory (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). Each of these primary sources is vital to examine the related information on the study. Using Maxwell's (2013) and Ravitch and Riggan's (2017) model for a conceptual framework, the research design aligns with the study's goals, research questions, and research design.

One step to understanding and planning for college services like CAMP is to examine how migrant individuals perceive the university environment and their experiences as college students (Bordes & Arrendondo, 2005). As CAMP students grow towards identity development and self-authorship, essential is to understand how they make sense of their experiences. Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship examined how CAMP changed migrant students' identities during college and how they make meaning to their experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

### **Chickering's Theory of Identity Development**

According to Garfield and David (1986), Arthur Chickering had been a significant force in outlining the foundation of the seven vectors of college students' identity development in higher education. The seven vectors contributed to the research questions on how CAMP students' identities develop during college. Chickering's

Theory of Identity Development is appropriate to understand how migrant students' identities develop during the CAMP program and college. Identity development is an evolving process in which one continuously reworks their sense of self and relationships with other people as they encounter challenges in the environment, causing them to question their current conceptualizations (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development model is specific to college students' growth towards developing their identity. While identity development examines how individuals develop their views and identity between adolescence and early adulthood, identity development is a continuum throughout one's life (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959). Chickering's seven vectors refer to identity as one's global identity as an overall sense of self or being (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

This theory proposed that developmental tasks occur through seven sequential challenges, described as vectors or tasks. Chickering's theory illustrates college students' development during college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The seven vectors are developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. These vectors illustrate how college students build awareness and develop their identity (Chickering, 2010; Garfield & David, 1986).

Although the seven vectors of identity development are sequentially listed, students move from vector to vector at different rates or experience these vectors simultaneously (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Nevertheless, these vectors build on each other and lead to other areas of development such as complexity, stability, and

intellectual growth (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). These vectors are flexible within the individual's identity development process and apply during different development stages. Students exhibit an overall sense of self or are comfortable with themselves during identity development process (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

For Chickering and Reisser (1993), developing competence is the first vector. There are three types of competence within this vector: intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal qualities. Intellectual competence is acquiring knowledge and skills to master content and establish the ability to understand, interpret, and incorporate intellectual perspectives of their experiences (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students learn to use the skills they already possess by using their judgment and mind, and they learn to build their skills to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Physical and manual competence includes athletic and recreation activities; it involves attention to wellness, artistic achievement, and manual exercises. The final competence within this vector is interpersonal competence. The characteristics of interpersonal competence include communication, listening, and working effectively with others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Interpersonal competence also focuses on building positive relationships with individuals or groups that flourish and are functional (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The interpersonal competence examined how migrant students increase their competence, learn how to trust their abilities, receive constructive feedback from others, and integrate their skills into establishing a sense of self-confidence.

Managing emotions is the second vector, and it occurs when students develop a sense of control in managing their emotional capacity. Students develop an awareness of

the variation of their feelings and have developed the coping skills to balance their feelings while understanding the feelings of others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The student's emotional developmental skills are evolving. When students learn to identify and accept feelings as a normal process, there is an increased awareness of how they identify their emotions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In addition, students develop and understand how to change assumptions that may have contributed to negative feelings (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Instead of allowing emotions like love, happiness, anger, depression, or guilt to take over their feelings, awareness grows (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). They learn how to cope and express their emotions appropriately (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Managing emotions can be challenging for individuals and even more difficult for college students (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Successfully navigating complicated circumstances requires the students to harness and aptly manage their emotions (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). In this vector, the student recognizes the root of their emotions and feelings. The managing emotions vector allowed migrant students to acknowledge the source of their emotions and feelings and understand how to work through these emotions. This vector explained how migrant students become aware of their emotional responses and how they developed the skills to handle different emotions before releasing negative emotions.

The third vector is moving through autonomy toward interdependence. Focusing on the moving through autonomy toward interdependence offered an understanding of how this vector enabled migrant students to explain their connection with themselves and others. This vector is the student's independence from others and learning to depend on

themselves (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Transitioning from autonomy toward interdependence requires emotional and instrumental independence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). At this point of their development, emotional and instrumental independence transpires. The moving through autonomy toward interdependence vector explained how migrant students develop self-sufficiency, pursue their own goals and interest and become self-directed. This vector also described how migrant students establish reciprocal and equal relationships.

Instrumental independence necessitates critical thinking, guidance with little direction, and readiness to search for information that meets the student's desires (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). This emotional process occurs when students take responsibility for making their own choices and not the choices or opinions of others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Separation from support and others exists when the student develops an understanding of sacrifice, initiative, and adaptability (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Tanaid & Wright, 2019). The student achieves instrumental independence by organizing activities and solving problems independently (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The student learns how to create autonomy with others, facilitating healthier models of interdependence and relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). There is a conscious awareness of external influences, such as community, society, and worldviews shaping their realization and affecting their choices (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Developing mature interpersonal relationships is the fourth vector. As Chickering and Reisser (1993) illustrated, the development in this vector involves tolerance and appreciation of differences and capacity for intimacy. In this vector, students develop tolerance and appreciation of the differences of others, both intercultural and

interpersonal (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). They learn to understand and appreciate the differences of others and do not generalize or categorize people based on their experiences. They develop the ability to establish intimate relationships, choose healthier relationships, and make lasting commitments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Employing the vector of developing mature interpersonal relationships explained how migrant students developed their tolerance and appreciation in an intercultural and interpersonal environment. It also explained how migrant students build their ability for intimate and healthy relationships and make firm commitments.

Unlike the other four vectors, the fifth vector, establishing identity, is not as flexible. Students cannot move from vector to vector at different stages or rates to establish identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The establishing identity vector is dependent on the student's developmental experiences from the first four vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The first four vectors are critical in the student's development process. Establishing identity relies on the first four vectors to develop the fifth vector, which involves students' comfort with body and appearance and their comfort with gender and sexual orientation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This vector consists of developing intercultural and interpersonal competency, and developing intimate relationships (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). The student develops an understanding of self in a social, historical, and cultural context (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). They also have a sense of self in response to feedback from others they value (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

In this vector, the student develops self-acceptance and self-esteem (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The establishing identity vector is a culmination of the student



developmental process within the first four vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Developing this competency can reduce students' bias and expand their mindset to accept others' differences (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). This vector examined how migrant students become comfortable with their identity and how they develop their mindset to accept others' differences.

Developing purpose is the sixth vector of developing precise vocational plans and realistic goals, planning suitable personal interests and activities, and establishing meaningful interpersonal and family commitments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In this vector, the student intentionally makes decisions and does not change their choices even when confronted with challenges or adversaries (Patton et al., 2016). The term vocational used in this vector refers to work, career, or an individual's lifelong aspirations (Patton et al., 2016). The process of developing purpose entails decision-making and setting goals. These decisions and goals are affected and influenced by the student's way of life and family (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The student establishes confidence in their identity in this vector, influencing their self-purpose (Patton et al., 2016). Applying the developing purpose vector allowed CAMP students to reflect and help them understand their family dynamics and ethnic and cultural background. It also examined how migrant students develop their purpose.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) finalized the vectors with the development of integrity. In the seventh and the final vector, students incorporate the skills they developed in the first six vectors into the seventh vector, such as their values and the values of others, understanding differences, beliefs, and self-interests (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser (1993) distinguished this vector by describing

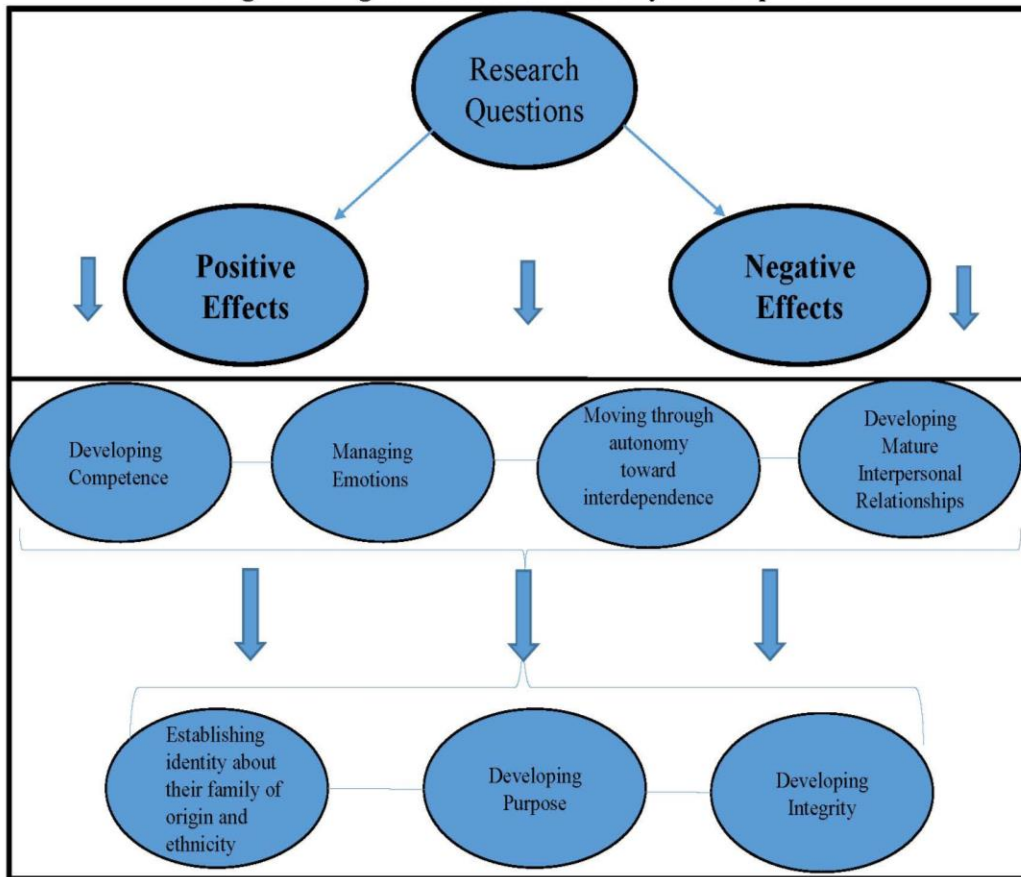
three consecutive overlapping stages. Each stage of this vector characterizes the individual's integrity, which entails humanizing and personalizing values and developing congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). During the humanizing and personalizing values stage, students become more aware of fellow human beings and their interests while respecting their beliefs and values (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students match their values with socially responsible behavior developing their congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This vector develops students' ability to identify commitments and establishes clear boundaries that are reasonable and appropriate, and students learn the value of self-respect and develop responsible behavior (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The development of the integrity vector reflected how the migrant students' established their sense of self and developed their self-esteem. This vector focused on how migrant students shift their beliefs and values to accept their social and cultural context.

Chickering's theory is relevant to some student populations, but this theory is not effective when capturing the essence of other identities (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Migrant students or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students with political or social agendas may move through these vectors and develop differently than other students (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). However, the primary purpose of using Chickering's theory is to understand how migrant students develop their identities during college and how they make meaning to their experiences. Using an intersectional perspective with underrepresented students expands the theoretical understanding of identity development (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Migrant students may navigate these vectors differently than other students from non-migrant backgrounds.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) summarized the seven vectors as students' process towards transformation and individuation. Students discover and refine their unique individuality (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). By establishing identity and developing roles, students will gain a sense of self and acceptance (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). College students experience numerous obstacles that contribute to their developmental growth of identity and learning how to resolve these issues is essential as they journey through establishing their identity (Patton et al., 2016). These vectors helped describe the developmental changes that occur with migrant students during their undergraduate journey and gain a sense of the influences of CAMP. It also examined how migrant students navigate these vectors—ultimately learning if the students feel more confident in their capabilities (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering's theory offered an understanding of the stages of identity development that impact migrant students' experience and personal identity. It also explored how the migrant students grasp these changes in their evolution. As migrant students complete their undergraduate education, the various phases and transitions they experience are vital. The seven vectors contributed to the research questions on how migrant students' identities develop during the CAMP program and college. These vectors explained the negative and positive experiences shaping migrant students' identities. The vectors focused on their transition and development growth as they established their identity and developed a purpose.

**Chickering and Reisser's (1993) model of identity development seven vectors:  
Stages of Migrant Students' Identity Development**



*Figure 1.* Concept map based on Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quaye's (2016) seven vectors specified by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development model.

**Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship**

Chickering's theory of identity development provided an in-depth understanding of how migrant students make meaning to the process of their identity development during the CAMP program and college. Using Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship examined how CAMP students construct their personal growth and knowledge during the CAMP program and college. In addition, Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship examined how migrant students construct their personal growth and

knowledge during the CAMP program. Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship expounds upon Robert Kegan's constructive development theory, which illustrates the levels of awareness of a college student's development. Baxter Magolda (2001) explained that Kegan's constructive development theory is the thought process people use to construct sets of their reality over time, which accounts for their experience. This phase of self-evolution is the framework to understand how individuals generate their views on the world, self, and relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Kegan's constructive development theory detailed stages and sequences of awareness that lead to further mature and effective meaning-making systems in self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Self-authorship interconnects one's epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal developmental dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda (2001) identified epistemology growth as how we know or decide what to believe. The researcher distinguished intrapersonal growth as how we know or choose what to believe and interpersonal growth as how we construct relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The focus of a college student is the epistemological dimension, and it is when a student realizes how to decide what to believe or know (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The intrapersonal dimension is how an individual view themselves and the interpersonal dimension is when an individual builds relationships with others—often considered beyond the scope of educators (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Self-authorship focuses on the ideology and internal capacity to define one's identity, beliefs, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Each dimension is intertwined and contributes to gaining knowledge, learning, and growth of one's self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Individuals' developmental processes require self-authorship growth on all three dimensions through their late teenage years and early twenties (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The three dimensions explore how individuals know or decide what to believe, how individuals view themselves, and how they construct relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The three dimensions make meaning of migrant students' inner ability to describe and define their inner beliefs within CAMP at a PWI. Baxter Magolda (2001) described the three dimensions of development as the individual's journey into self-authorship.

Baxter Magolda, Creamer, and Meszaros (2010) posited four distinct phases to attain self-authorship. They are external formulas, crossroads, becoming the author of one's life, and internal foundation. The elements of self-authorship are interrelated and entail trusting one's inner voice and developing one's own identity, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008). The three elements of self-authorship identified by Baxter Magolda (2001) are: (1) allows the individual to gain control over thoughts and responses, which leads to greater confidence within their internal voice; (2) develops a sense of philosophy to guide their actions, and offer an understanding of how to live life authentically; and (3) involves the integration of one's internal voice and foundation with the external world. These three elements of self-authorship evolve as students develop a greater focus on their ability to know themselves, understand themselves, and develop relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008). Each element offers an awareness of the evolution and cycle of developing self-authorship.

Recent researchers have investigated the developmental process of college students towards self-authorship, but they have not considered how college students' ethnicity may influence the developmental process (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). The theory of self-authorship expands on the students' views to recognize multiple perspectives in pursuing their undergraduate degree, recognize challenges, and acknowledge their cultural reality and cultural choices (Baxter Magolda, Creamer, & Meszaros, 2010). The three driving questions in self-authorship are: How do I know? Who am I? and What relationships do I want? (Baxter Magolda, 2001). They are crucial to reflecting how CAMP student development intertwines epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions.

An individual's evolution towards self-authorship is when their internal voice takes over and replaces external influences. The individual's internal voice grows stronger and is in control to navigate external influences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda's (2001) longitudinal research found that to become the authors of one's life, individuals must reshape their epistemology, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. Individuals must transform what they believe, view themselves, and develop relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Discovery of oneself occurs during this process of growth and development towards self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). By revealing the CAMP students' process towards self-authorship, these students also understand how they developed their views on the world, themselves, and relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Researcher Pizzolato (2003) revealed that marginalized students who exhibited self-authorship were successful in college because they could resist the expectations of

others. Throughout the self-authoring process, an individual examines external formulas and the internal foundation learned and compared them to the new challenges to make meaning of their experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Achieving self-authorship is possible when there is support to help an individual transition to internal meaning-making (Baxter Magolda, 2001). For CAMP students to understand their new experiences, they developed an awareness and made meaning of their previous experiences. Reflecting and making sense of these experiences influence how they understand and frame themselves and resist the expectations of others to succeed in college. The construction of one's experience or meaning-making is a vital element of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Although establishing one's self-authorship is a continuous process, mainly when presented with challenges (Baxter Magolda, 2001), this theory examines the transition of CAMP students during their undergraduate education. Their college experience offer opportunities for students to question and explore, increasing the chance of building an identity separate from outside influences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Understanding the developmental tools that empower students to construct how they view the world, their roles as learners and citizens, and how they employ their relationships with others can provide insight into the evolution process of self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014). CAMP students understood their self-authorship and recognized the influences of the CAMP program provided the challenge and support to shift their internal sense of self, beliefs, identity, and relationships. It made meaning of their self-authorship journey and examined their external formulas and internal foundations.



## **The Learning Partnerships Model**

Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) illustrated the development of self-authorship through a learning partnership between the student and the support from others. The three dimensions of self-authorship identified by (Baxter Magolda, 2001) are epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Each dimension has a connection to the LPM, highlighting the learning outcomes of students. LPM assists students with creating an internal belief system, internal identity, and sharing authority and knowledge with their relationship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The Learning Partnerships Model facilitates the shift from authority dependence to self-authorship, assists students in understanding the college environment and develop skills to handle challenges (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). LPM facilitates the shift from students' dependence on authority to developing their self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

LPM immediately engages students and provides the balance of autonomy and support necessary for students to develop their internal beliefs, identities, and constructions of relationships (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). LPM made meaning to migrant students' experiences with the CAMP program support and services. It also explained how the migrant students manage to stay with the program as they develop their internal beliefs, identities, and constructions of their relationship with CAMP. Learning partnerships challenge authority dependence in the form of three core assumptions about learning (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The three core assumptions are: (1) knowledge is complex and socially constructed; (2) one's identity plays a central role in crafting knowledge claims; and (3) knowledge is mutually constructed mutually

via the sharing of expertise and authority (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Baxter Magolda and King (2004) characterized the first core assumption as the complexity and social construction of knowledge that uses multiple perspectives to make choices in context. The individual is central to knowledge construction (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The second core assumption situates learning in students' experiences by building their self-knowledge and identifying their essential views and influences (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The third core assumption is the sharing of authority and expertise, which offers the opportunity for mutual negotiation of knowledge (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Baxter Magolda and King (2004) concluded that these three core assumptions emphasize autonomy via personal responsibility for learning and molding one's beliefs.

Baxter Magolda and King (2004) stated that learning partnerships challenge authority dependence via three principles that foster the development of self-authorship. The three principles are the following: (1) validating learners' capacity as knowledge constructors; (2) situating learning in learners' experience; and (3) defining learning as mutually constructing meaning (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Baxter Magolda and King (2004) clarified that the first principle was necessary to validate students as knowledgeable learners. This principle allows students to realize they are fundamental learners and encourage sharing ideas and perspectives with others or authority (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The second principle situates learning as part of the student's personal experience to build identity instead of building on the experiences of the authority (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The final principle defines learning as a mutual constructive process of exchanging viewpoints and learning while supporting

participation in the social construction of knowledge (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

These three principles encourage students' independence in identifying their experiences and constructing their perspectives, allowing them to connect to their own experiences and others (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

While a learning partnership between an educator and a student is crucial in moving toward self-authorship, the support offered by educators allows students to understand and handle their challenges and gain the ability to withstand adversity (Baxter Magolda et al., 2010). LPM mutually engages learners and supporters, assisting students in reflecting on new and existing assumptions. Students examine their experiences and the challenges and complexities of the world around them (Baxter Magolda, 2004).

These partnerships are often fluid and are evolving toward the social construction of knowledge and the centrality of personal meaning-making in interpreting experience (Baxter Magolda, 2004). With help from supporters, students encounter and construct new assumptions, compare them to existing ones and reshape their beliefs accordingly (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Students gain the ability to question and analyze the authority before accepting the authority's claim (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Eventually, students take responsibility for their beliefs, identities, and relationships, facilitating their self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Barber and King (2014) ascertained that while most students would grow developmentally by the time they graduate college, many students may not gain self-authorship. Obtaining more information about the influences of programs like CAMP is essential for educators. It is significant to learn about other support services that allow educators to plan programs, design instructions, and pedagogy strategies for their

students (Barber & King, 2014). The Learning Partnerships Model helps students validate their ability to learn, establish their learning to experience, and define learning as an exchange of collaboration (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). As students build their knowledge, they learn to examine how the challenges and complexities of college allow them to bring their perspectives on deciding what to believe and how to share responsibilities with others (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). LPM offered an understanding of the connection between guidance and empowerment and how migrant students processed self-authorship development with the support of CAMP.

Examining the background of CAMP participants is essential to understanding the significant experiences that added to their identity development and self-authorship. Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship will fill a gap in the literature on migrant students and how they process their identity development and develop their personal growth and knowledge during their first year in the CAMP program. The LPM also contributes to the limited literature on how CAMP assists students with their development towards self-authorship during their undergraduate education.

### **Migrant Students' Characteristics and Barriers**

Many circumstances contribute to the identity development and self-authorship of CAMP migrant students, which also entails their role and engagement with their educational environment. It remains critical to understand the experiences of CAMP students at a PWI, how they construct their identity development, and how it prompts growth toward self-authorship. Educators can be more aware and effective in creating a positive learning environment (Baxter Magolda, 2001) by understanding the

environmental influences, particularly for CAMP students attending a PWI. Moreover, learning about their campus experiences could provide more detailed information about the student's learning process.

### **Predominately White Institutions (PWI)**

Increasing Latinx student enrollment in colleges across the United States requires universities to create an environment that is more welcoming and receptive to underrepresented students (Rolón Dow, Covarrubias, & Guerrón Montero, 2016). The rapid growth of the Latinx population is changing the culture and linguistic landscape in learning environments throughout the United States (Rolón Dow et al., 2016).

Understanding the Latinx population's experiences and the influences of higher education is crucial as this population affects many communities across the nation and shapes the economy and politics (Rolón Dow et al., 2016).

Rolón Dow et al. (2016) conducted a study of the experiences of Latinx students enrolled at a PWI. They described how students expressed feelings of invisibility and not being recognized at their college campuses. Diversity and inclusion on a PWI campus are not often a reality and are not actively implemented (Rolón Dow et al., 2016). The purpose of the study was to examine Latinx students' lived experiences at an IHE and understand their social challenges. Using data from qualitative interviews, focus groups, and online surveys (Rolón Dow et al., 2016), the researchers explored Latinx experiences with inclusion within their daily life at the university. Specifically, the researchers wanted to understand if there were opportunities for Latinx students to learn about Latinx culture and history.

Rolón Dow et al. (2016) articulated that instead of a PWI adapting and being receptive to the college campus demographics, cultural changes, and rapid diverse growth, the PWI expects Latinx students to acclimate to the college environment (Rolón Dow et al., 2016). To better embrace a campus culture of equality that reflects inclusion and diversity, universities will need to increase their efforts by enrolling more Latinx students and increasing the number of Latinx faculty and staff working at their college campuses (Rolón Dow et al., 2016). There are advantages for all students to experience integrated academic, social activities, and common spaces on a college campus (Rolón Dow et al., 2016).

A college environment of diversity and inclusion can better serve the needs of Latinx (Rolón Dow et al., 2016). Creating a comfortable and welcoming learning atmosphere for Latinx students is essential to their undergraduate experience (Rolón Dow et al., 2016). Ultimately, increasing diversity in the college community embraces a college culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion (Rolón Dow et al., 2016).

According to Harwood, Mendenhall, Lee, Riopelle, and Hunt (2018), many university campuses view their institution as a diverse and multicultural environment educating students from different backgrounds. However, Harwood et al. (2018) revealed that students described their undergraduate campus experience was not one of inclusion but one of exclusion. The researchers conducted eleven focus groups and an online survey targeting 4,800 BIPOC students to examine their lived experiences of attending a public university. Students reported experiencing social and academic disparities as soon as they stepped onto a college campus (Harwood, Mendenhall, Lee, Riopelle, & Hunt, 2018). There is a sense of not belonging or feeling welcomed within

classrooms, dormitories, campus activities, and academic departments. Hardwood et al. (2018) explained that these students' campus college experiences of exclusion at a PWI often result from historical racial segregation and malice.

In their findings, Hardwood et al. (2018) concluded that many BIPOC students are constantly vigilant on how they manage their daily routines on a college campus. They carefully create defense mechanisms avoiding certain areas on the college campus where a climate of antagonism may exist, contributing to a degree of segregation and a false sense of campus integration (Hardwood et al., 2018). Examining CAMP migrant students' experiences with inclusiveness on the college campus provided more insight into the study and how they perceive a PWI.

Taylor and Cantwell (2019) conducted a quantitative analysis that demonstrated how institutions of higher education have become increasingly more unequal and illustrated how the rise of the IHE's inequality creates limited opportunities for underserved students. Taylor and Cantwell (2019) referred to higher education as a system of unequal education and argued there were four crucial areas for the inequality in higher education: (1) competition for resources and social status creates a system of unequal higher education; (2) retreat of direct government funding has unleashed this competition with growing intensity; (3) policy choices and cultural practices have increased inequality among colleges and universities in the United States; and (4) growing institutional inequality systematically disadvantages underserved students. The system of unequal higher education affects and limits opportunities for college students that are Latinx, BIPOC, and from low-income backgrounds (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). Students from a higher socioeconomic background are at an advantage and are prepared

to succeed academically in comparison to college students that are Latinx, BIPOC, and from low-income backgrounds (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). Unlike their counterparts, underserved students from lower social-economic backgrounds face barriers to success throughout their educational careers (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). While underrepresented students may overcome many obstacles to achieve academic success, institutional inequality decreases their success opportunities (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019).

### **First-generation Latinx College Students**

Torres, Reiser, Le Peau, Davis, and Ruder (2006) conducted a constructivist grounded-theory study to understand the experiences of first-generation Latinx college students and the processes used to gain academic information. The researchers also examined Latinx college students' academic support services and the effect on their cognitive development. Torres et al. (2006) found that first-generation Latinx college students lack educational information. The findings of Torres et al. (2006) indicated the following: (1) Latinx students did not know how to navigate the campus resources to gain academic advice or support services; (2) there is a reluctance among Latinx college students to trust authority figures; (3) Latinx students must earn the trust of an authority figure before they see them as a valuable source; (4) Latinx students' relied on getting information from peers, pamphlets, or staff with whom they had built a personal relationship; and (5) when Latinx students changed to seek information from an authority, they experienced some difficulty with adjusting and perceived it as a negative experience. Torres et al. (2006) affirmed that Latinx students are unfamiliar with the culture and tradition of seeking assistance and trusting authority figures. Latinx students



will not seek help or even benefit from the traditional methods of getting help on a college campus (Torres Reiser, Le Peau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006).

The researchers concluded that Latinx students' process to gain academic information is often the result of previous negative experiences with individuals in authority positions (Torres et al., 2006). As a result of these negative experiences, Latinx students often do not understand or recognize the roles of legitimate authority figures (Torres et al., 2006). Furthermore, Latinx students do not easily trust authority figures and must establish a relationship of trust before they seek assistance (Torres et al., 2006). Overall, first-generation Latinx college students navigate the college environment uniquely, unlike traditional students (Torres et al., 2006). Lastly, Torres et al. (2006) recommended six essential strategies to assist first-generation Latinx college students seeking academic information. The researchers recommended the following six strategies to build a personal student-advisor relationship: (1) understand the unique aspects of the Latinx student population; (2) seek out the Latinx students rather than expect them to come on their own; (3) clearly define the roles to the Latinx students and communicate the shared responsibility involved in an advisee-advisor relationship; (4) build a trusting relationship with Latinx students; (5) eliminate the runaround for Latinx student; and (6) consider involving Latinx families in the advising process if the student feels it would help (Torres et al., 2006). Following the recommended steps, students will understand the advisor's roles, recognize the advisor's expertise, and seek information and resources (Torres et al., 2006).

The current literature on migrant students recognized that successful academic performance relies on a sustained and well-built educational system (Garza, Trueba, &

Reyes, 2016). Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested creating and maintaining educationally powerful environments for students requires IHEs to address their academic procedures, curriculum content, and student support services. Offering a quality learning environment comprised of teaching, advisement, mentorship, and collaboration will increase the students' skills, identity, and purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The PWI environment is essential to the study, and it is a contributing factor to understanding the impacts on the academic support and achievement of migrant students. Examining how migrant students seek academic help or resources during the CAMP program and throughout their undergraduate education at a PWI is vital to the study. While the review of research related to PWIs is insightful and helps shape an understanding of Latinx experiences, these experiences may be different or may not be applicable at a non-PWI.

Reviews of research related to the CAMP program emphasized the importance of providing and sustaining financial, academic, and emotional support to ensure the college success of migrant students (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Support services may include on-campus employment, tutoring, mentoring, and the student's knowledge of available support programs (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). However, there is limited literature on the support services available for migrant students enrolled in a PWI. Additional literature reviews on Latinx enrolled in a PWI ascertained that within several diverse Latinx groups, students individually expressed distinct experiences on how they navigated through the college campus and coped with varying types of unwelcoming interactions (Rolón Dow et al., 2016).

The study draws upon existing research, which examined migrant students' barriers and the effects of CAMP program services. In examining the literature related to the research topic, migrant students experience common barriers to pursuing an undergraduate degree. Many barriers encompass migrant students' academic achievements due to the disruptions of frequent moves, inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007). These common barriers found in the literature are organized into the following themes: academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves, inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals.

### **Migrant Students' Disruptions of Frequent Moves**

Farmers in the United States rely on MSFWs to harvest and work their crops to meet market demands (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Garza et al., 2016; Ramirez, 2012). For many generations, MSFWs followed the crops and agricultural harvesting seasons to support their families (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Salinas & Reyes, 2004). As a result of MSFWs following the harvesting season, migrant students' education is interrupted (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Migrant students continuously change schools at different times of the school year. They either enroll late or withdraw early during the academic school year (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). The constant change in schools and unstable enrollment during the school year jeopardize their potential to achieve their education (Salinas & Reyes, 2004).

Willison and Jang (2009) noted that the frequent moves and travel schedules determine when migrant students begin school or end the school year. There is no set time when students enter a school year. In addition, as migrant students enroll in different schools, they have to adjust to a new environment and another academic curriculum (Willison & Jang, 2009). The resources to provide migrant students with academic support vary in each school (Willison & Jang, 2009). School districts may not have the resources or educational support system to address the needs of migrant students. Willison and Jang (2009) explained that some schools might not be equipped with the educational services to support migrant students with their academic needs. The continuous school change may also affect maintaining good school records of migrant students (Garza et al., 2016; Willison & Jang, 2009). Personal information, grades, and grade point averages of a migrant student may be inconsistent or inaccurate due to the constant moves (Garza et al., 2016).

### **Inadequate Preparation of Migrant Students**

The few research studies on migrant students ascertained that the migrant students' deficit of academic preparation and completion of undergraduate degree programs are due to the disruptions of frequent moves (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Garza et al., 2016; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students are amongst the most academically vulnerable students in the United States (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). They are also the most academically disadvantaged group of students in the educational school system (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). MSFWs have high mobility rates and the most impoverished population (Araujo, 2011; Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018; Garza et

al., 2016; Peterson, 2014; Ramirez, 2012; Zalaquett et al., 2007). They are constantly moving across the country during different times of the year to cultivate and harvest crops, affecting the ability of educators to serve and educate migrant students (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Ramirez, 2012; Salinas & Reyes, 2004; Zalaquett et al., 2007). These constant moves cause many school absences that create challenges in the educational experiences of migrant students (Garza et al., 2016).

The challenges of constantly moving contribute to the unstable foundation of migrant students' education, resulting in age-grade differences, held back a grade, low retention, or graduation outlook (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Garza et al., 2016). The high mobility rates also affect the ability of educators to teach and serve migrant students properly (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Migrant students do not feel adequately prepared academically and resort to dropping out of school to seek work (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Garza et al., 2016). Research studies have also found that underserved students who continuously attend the same educational school system are prepared to succeed academically (Garza et al., 2016). For some migrant students, educational stability is beneficial, and regrettably, for other migrant students, stability is not an option due to the dire economic needs of the family (Garza et al., 2016). The constant moves and repeated school absences create a detrimental experience for migrant students who feel a sense of academic failure and lack of academic achievement (Garza et al., 2016). Unfortunately, these negative experiences and feeling a sense of academic loss are often not remedied among migrant students (Garza et al., 2016).

Another contributing factor of their inadequate academic preparation is that migrant students may not receive timely educational support services or assistance and

advisement to enroll in postsecondary education (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Often educators' perceptions of the lifestyle of migrant students make it even more challenging for students to advance in their education (Zalaquett et al., 2007). High school educators and counselors may not consider the importance of migrant students' academic aspirations to attain a college degree due to their opinions and views (Willison & Jang, 2009). Educators usually judge migrant students based on the lack of their educational credentials rather than see them for the capabilities to succeed academically (Willison & Jang, 2009).

Other factors contributing to migrant students' potential academic failures are the language barrier (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). For some migrant students, English is their second language (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Migrant students that are not proficient in English may not have the skills to succeed academically (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

### **Financial Hardships**

MSFWs have the highest economic hardships and have the lowest educational level (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). The dire economic need to contribute financially requires migrant students to work while pursuing a high school or undergraduate education, which significantly contributes to low academic achievement (Araujo, 2011; Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Ramirez, 2012). Migrant students must contribute to the families' needs at all times, and if they are not working, they care for their younger siblings (Araujo, 2011; Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Families expect migrant students to work while attending school and assist with the family finances (Araujo, 2011; Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). A lack,

of the desperate need to contribute to the family finances can prevent migrant students from their academic journey (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Santamaria Graff, McCain, & Gomez-Vilchis, 2013).

Many migrant students' education is interrupted due to working in the fields (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Migrant students enrolled in college full-time also work part-time jobs to assist with paying for their college tuition and contribute to the families' financial needs (Araujo 2011). The responsibility of migrant students to work and contribute to the family finances while attending school is a barrier to their educational success (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The migrant student population has the lowest high school graduation rates and does not complete high school or attain a higher level of education (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Often, the family's financial demands outweigh the prospects of a college education and contribute to the migrant student withdrawing from school (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Migrant students cannot simultaneously manage the hours required to study to pass a course and the number of work hours to earn a decent income (Araujo, 2011). As a result of these challenges, migrant students may not graduate college on time (Araujo, 2011) or abandon their goals and needs to obtain a college degree (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

The financial need to pay for tuition contributes to migrant students dropping out of college. Not being able to pay for tuition is the cause for 56% of migrant students to withdraw from higher education (Araujo, 2011). Some migrant students cannot return to college because they do not have the financial resources to pay for their tuition (Araujo, 2011). Migrant students depend on assistance from financial aid to help with their college tuition (Araujo 2011). The financial hardships and educational challenges put

migrant students at risk of withdrawing from college before graduating (Willison & Jang, 2009). The barriers migrant students face with the high degree of poverty and the need to work while attending school increase the obstacles to their educational achievement (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Garza et al., 2016).

### **Lack of Exposure to College-Educated Individuals**

In addition to these barriers of frequent moves, inadequate preparation, and financial hardships, the MSFWs' limited education also decreases the chance that migrant students will attain a postsecondary education (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Garza et al., 2016). The *National Agricultural Workers Survey* (2018) reported an average of 19% of MSFWs completed the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Researchers confirmed migrant students' educational attainment is substantially associated with their parent's level of education (Willison & Jang, 2009). The lack of exposure to college-educated individuals can be challenging for migrant students to achieve higher levels of education (Willison & Jang, 2009). Literature on migrant students found that poverty and constant moves are the two primary barriers affecting migrant students' education (Garza et al., 2016). Still, the insufficient education of parents affects migrant students' prospects to complete a high school diploma and pursue higher education (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Migrant students fall behind academically in their grades and have low educational achievement and high dropout rates (Lopez et al., 2001; Zalaquett et al., 2007).

In the United States, MSFWs have the highest illiteracy rates and have low education and English proficiency (Zalaquett et al., 2007). The illiteracy rates and English proficiency levels vary by birthplace and ethnicity (Zalaquett et al., 2007). MSFWs of Mexican origin or born in other Latin American countries have lower rates of



English fluency (Zalaquett et al., 2007). A limited number of MSFWs have pursued an education to advance their skills, such as job training, classes for U.S. citizenship, and even take courses to learn English or adult education (Zalaquett et al., 2007). MSFWs work long hours and do not understand the educational system, comprehend academic policies, and advocate their educational students' rights (Zalaquett et al., 2007). The expectation of MSFWs families is migrant students work while attending school to contribute towards the families' finances (Lopez et al., 2001). The long work hours and not knowing the educational requirements prevent parents from advocating for their migrant students and place barriers to academic achievements (Lopez et al., 2001).

The inadequate educational preparation of parents makes it difficult for them to be engaged with migrant students' education (Lopez et al., 2001). Language barriers are also other factors that prevent parents from being involved in their children's education (Zalaquett et al., 2007). The USDA ERA (2020) reported 57% of MSFWs were Hispanic of Mexican origin, 7% were Hispanic or Other, and 45% were born in the U.S., including Puerto Rico. Most migrant students are from a Latinx background, and the primary language conversed with their parents is Spanish (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students are often relied on to serve as translators for their parents who are not proficient in English (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students start translating for their parents at an early age concerning adult matters (Zalaquett et al., 2007).

The barriers migrant students face may prevent them from adequately preparing for college and attaining a postsecondary degree (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Crucial is for parents' active involvement in migrant students' education to develop a positive learning experience (Lopez et al., 2001). Yet, due to the lack of parent involvement, migrant

students must rely on their high school and college personnel to assist them with academic support and educational aspirations (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Migrant students are first-generation college students and providing MFSWs parents with college and CAMP information can keep them involved and engaged with the educational process (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004).

### **Migrant Students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)**

Although there is a paucity of literature on the experiences of migrant students enrolled in CAMP, the few studies conducted on the CAMP program found that CAMP has helped alleviate some of the struggles migrant students experience in pursuing their undergraduate degree (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). CAMP services include counseling, tutoring, mentorship, financial aid, financial aid stipends for books and supplies, housing costs, academic support, and assistance with course selections, training, coaching and life skills, and professional development workshops (Araujo, 2011; Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; U.S. DoEd, 2020b). CAMP focuses on the retention of migrant students by providing supplementary support services not often offered in higher education. The CAMP program also assists migrant students who cannot communicate fluently or learn efficiently in English (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). Modified instruction to help English Language Learners is available with the CAMP support services (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). Additional services CAMP provide migrant students are cultural enrichment and network activities, internships, and scholarship opportunities (Araujo, 2011; Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; O'Connor et al., 2020; U.S. DoEd, 2020b). CAMP conducts intentional outreach and recruitment of migrant students to enroll them in higher

education (Willison & Jang, 2009). The CAMP staff works closely with the college recruiter and high school advisor to get migrant students to consider applying for college and the CAMP program (Willison & Jang, 2009).

To understand migrant students' experiences in the CAMP program pursuing an undergraduate education, Araujo (2011) conducted a qualitative study and examined the experiences of eight Latinx CAMP students' transitioning into their first year of college. Araujo (2011) examined how CAMP was influential in providing migrant students with community cultural wealth and various methods of capital, which included financial, emotional, and academic support services. Araujo (2011) research also focused on cultural, social, and navigational capital to understand the CAMP students' experiences in their first year of the program. The cultural capital offered an understanding of the migrant students' aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital that influences their educational goals (Araujo, 2011). The social capital examined how migrant students developed their networks and used community resources to navigate the university environment (Araujo, 2011). Finally, the navigational capital identified how migrant students cultivated their skills and strategies through social settings and circumstances not often accessible (Araujo, 2011).

The participants in the study worked in farming fields while attending college and enrolled in CAMP. Data collection resulted from individual conversation interviews with questions concerning gain of capital, navigation of the educational system, drive to complete high school and attend college, faculty, and professional assistance with enrollment and college completion. The migrant students in the study shared similar concerns regarding how to pay for their college tuition. Migrant students reported not

knowing if they could enroll in school because they could not afford to pay college tuition (Araujo, 2011). Many of the participants in the study also disclosed how they did not receive assistance or information from their high school counselors about higher education, applying for postsecondary education enrollment, scholarships, or financial aid (Araujo, 2011). The CAMP program was helpful and assisted migrant students with their application forms and paying for their first year of college (Araujo, 2011). CAMP provided migrant students with stipends to assist them with college tuition, books, and housing (Araujo, 2011). The support offered by CAMP allowed the participants to enroll in their first year of college without being concerned about tuition and housing (Araujo, 2011).

In addition, participants in the study reported how CAMP required them to live in the same space, attend meetings together, and enroll in the same freshman seminar course (Araujo, 2011). Participating in all activities together during the first year of CAMP created a bond, where these students learn to know each other, establish friendships and build a support system (Araujo, 2011). CAMP participants' constant contact with each other and the CAMP staff created a cohesive environment and support system (Araujo, 2011). Migrant students felt less lonely and less isolated from the campus environment (Araujo, 2011). The CAMP staff served as mentors to migrant students and assisted with retention ensuring these students completed the first year of college (Araujo, 2011). Findings from the study indicated that migrant students viewed CAMP is an essential factor in their pursuit of a degree (Araujo, 2011). The participants in the study stated CAMP was a significant influence to pursue an undergraduate education (Araujo, 2011). Araujo's (2011) research illuminated how CAMP was instrumental in assisting migrant

students with various forms of capital by providing them with financial support and offering academic and emotional assistance during the program's first year. Even though the participants in the study faced many challenges during their first year, CAMP effectively provided the financial and academic resources and emotional support for most of these students to continue to their second year of college (Araujo, 2011).

Escamilla and Trevino (2014) stated that many migrant high school students do not know about the available support programs for college like CAMP. Often high school counselors do not know about the CAMP program, or educators do not provide migrant students with information about CAMP (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The qualitative study conducted by Escamilla and Trevino (2014) revealed even though migrant students experience many challenges in pursuit of a college degree, migrant students can turn these challenges into opportunities for attaining a college degree. Escamilla and Trevino (2014) reported that the students described three main themes: fictive kinship, family relationships, and social cultivation. The participants in the study described the CAMP program as a home environment away from their own homes (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Migrant students felt a special connection towards the CAMP staff and the CAMP community. CAMP students built a fictive kinship with faculty and CAMP staff members and depended on their assistance to handle emotional and academic stress (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Having the commonality of communicating informally in Spanish with the CAMP staff and students also offered a sense of fictive kinship (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

The participants in the interviews described CAMP as a community of family, which offers an abundance of cultural support and cultural activities (Escamilla &

Trevino, 2014). The migrant students felt a sense of family relationship with the CAMP staff. CAMP provided recognition events that entailed the accomplishments of distinguished Latinx leaders and celebrated different cultural holidays with their CAMP students (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The CAMP program also enrolled students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The participants in the study described the CAMP staff as sensitive to students' ethnic identity by offering various tools and techniques to handle certain circumstances and personal struggles. Escamilla and Trevino (2014) concluded that the concerted fictive kinship, family relationships, and social cultivation contributed to the migrant students' success in completing their college degrees. Thus, despite the myriad factors that may impact college success and potential barriers to attaining a college degree, the migrant students completed their academic education (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

Escamilla and Trevino (2014) stated that since the establishment of CAMP in 1972 to serve students from MSFWS, there is no accurate or formalized tracking system to stay in communication with CAMP staff and alumni. Rather, CAMP staff and alumni stay in touch informally (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). The researchers found getting participants for the study challenging since there was no formal tracking system in place (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). Therefore, data collection is limited due to the small sample sizes (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

The qualitative research conducted by O'Connor, Mancinas, and Troxel Deeg (2020) investigated the experiences of CAMP students in their first and second years at Arizona State University. The researcher used ethnographic methods to explore the experiences of first-year CAMP students and second-year CAMP alumni (O'Connor et

al., 2020). The study sought to understand how CAMP students and alumni developed their academic identities and handled their sense of belonging at the university (O'Connor et al., 2020). CAMP challenged migrant students to examine their academic identities and develop a sense of their individuality and possibilities for their future (O'Connor et al., 2020). With the support of the CAMP staff, migrant students develop a degree of authority and belonging within the university (O'Connor et al., 2020).

The researchers illustrated that the migrant students benefited from the one-on-one mentoring sessions, building a rapport with faculty and CAMP staff members. During these one-on-one mentoring sessions, migrant students received encouragement, guidance, and assistance in identifying their academic purpose and knowledge (O'Connor et al., 2020). The researchers also found mentoring was vital when migrant students felt disconnected or experienced discord within the university setting's expectations (O'Connor et al., 2020). The CAMP staff empowered migrant students and provided them with the confidence to continue their academic journey and transition to college life through CAMP activities and networks (O'Connor et al., 2020). The CAMP staff increased migrant students' confidence by encouraging them and challenging them to succeed academically (O'Connor et al., 2020). Participating in CAMP activities and programs created a bond between the CAMP staff and migrant students. Migrant students learned of their common purpose and vision and were encouraged by the CAMP staff to share their experiences. O'Connor et al. (2020) affirmed that CAMP assisted and supported migrant students with their identity development, educational achievement, and acclimation to the undergraduate environment. The interaction between CAMP students and the CAMP staff was instrumental in the migrant students completing their

first year of college (O'Connor et al., 2020). CAMP allowed migrant students who experienced being powerless or unimportant within the university setting to discover themselves, define their identities, and reach their academic goals (O'Connor et al., 2020). Finally, the researchers reported CAMP provided first-year migrant students with financial, academic, and emotional support to ensure their enrollment and college continuation (O'Connor et al., 2020).

Overall, the researchers found that CAMP creates a positive college experience for migrant students (Mendez & Bauman, 2018), producing a cohesive learning and community environment for migrant students (Ramirez, 2012). The migrant students in the studies described CAMP as creating a safe learning environment and a sense of belonging and community, which assisted them in persevering in their course work and continuing with their education (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020). The studies also found that the CAMP program helped migrant students with financial relief, assisted them with achieving academic success, and provided emotional support (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

The literature review explored the characteristics and barriers that influence first-generation college students from migrant farmworker families. This chapter included Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship to understand the evolution of migrant students' identities and growth towards self-authorship during their first year of college. It also presented the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) to explain the development of self-authorship through a



learning partnership between the student and the support from others. Further, the literature review discussed four significant challenges and obstacles of migrant students: academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals. Lastly, this chapter reviewed relevant literature to understand the CAMP program, the experiences of migrant students participating in CAMP, and the environmental influences of attending a predominately White institution.

As indicated, the paucity of research and literature regarding migrant and seasonal farmworker students' experiences enrolled in higher education, and the CAMP program warrants the research (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students' passage to a college education incorporates multiple challenges and struggles (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). The combined consequences of frequent moves, high degree of poverty, language and cultural barriers, and discrimination prevent many migrant students from attaining a college degree (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). The literature deliberated that upon migrant students' enrollment to college, it is necessary to offer financial, academic, and emotional support to ensure their endeavors in achieving an undergraduate degree (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Migrant students attending college for the first time may often experience discomfort and feel alienated (Araujo, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2020). Nevertheless, limited studies have illustrated how developing relationships with mentors and role models are essential to the migrant students' assimilation into the university environment (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005). Although numerous factors challenge the efforts of migrant students to complete their degrees (Santamaria Graff, McCain, & Gomez-Vilchis, 2013), researchers found that CAMP provided migrant students with the

necessary and supplemental support for their academic success and college degree achievements (Araujo 2011; Nora, 2003; Willison & Jang, 2009).

The existing research on CAMP has found the program significantly impacted migrant students' assistance during their first year of college (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). However, there is still a gap in the data on how many CAMP migrant students have attained a college degree after completing the CAMP program (Araujo, 2011; Cranston--Gingras et al., 2004; Salinas & Reyes, 2004; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Due to the dearth of literature on migrant students, there is a need for the present study. The research is essential to understand the experience of first-generation college migrant students attending a CAMP program. Specifically, the results from the study will significantly contribute to the literature on the CAMP program. The present study made meaning of the migrant students' experiences and shared their voices with pursuing a college education.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

The College Assistant Migrant Program's (CAMP) resources and services assist migrant students academically and financially during their first year of college (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the several barriers migrant students encounter can deter them from completing their college degrees (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Understanding the migrant students' experiences in the CAMP program warrants the need for the present research. The qualitative research aims to fill a gap in the literature by describing how migrant students characterize their experiences in the CAMP program intended to assist students during their first year of college at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south.

According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research allows the research design to be flexible, use an open-ended approach instead of a numerical data approach, and focus on understanding the perspectives, meanings, and points of view of the participants in the study. The three fundamental approaches to qualitative research identified by Maxwell (2013) are: (1) understand the meanings and perspectives of the people in the study and see the world from their point of view, rather than from the researcher's point of view; (2) recognize how these perspectives are shaped and shaped by their physical, social, and cultural contexts; and finally; (3) the specific processes that involve maintaining or altering the phenomena and relationships. Therefore, to understand and make meaning of the experience of first-year, first-generation college students from migrant and seasonal

farmworker families participating in the CAMP program, qualitative research is the most appropriate for the study using a narrative inquiry approach.

This chapter serves as the procedural guide for the study's methodology and presents the research design, research questions, research setting, data collection, and data analysis. Lastly, this chapter also describes validity and trustworthiness to ensure quality data collection and analyses.

### **Research Design**

Using narrative inquiry, the study explored the migrant students' stories and made meaning of their experiences. The narrative inquiry approach explains how migrant students shape their world and develop their experiences. Narrative inquiry allows participants to engage in conversations and describe their experiences through living and telling their thoughts and memories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of narrative inquiry also identified common patterns and themes of the participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition, narrative inquiry captured the migrant students' stories, elevated their voices, and provided awareness of their CAMP program experiences.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions served as a guide for the study.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

## **Research Setting**

The research setting was the University of North Georgia (UNG), a four-year public research university with an established CAMP program. UNG has five campuses across northeast Georgia, Blue Ridge Campus, Cumming Campus, Dahlonega Campus, Gainesville Campus, and Oconee Campus, serving a 30-county rural area (UNG, 2020a). These county areas experience a higher poverty rate and lower median household income than state and national data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The university offers over 120 academic programs and has 19,748 undergraduate and graduate students (UNG, 2020c). The percentage of gender is 58% female and 42% male (UNG, 2020c). The percentage breakdown of race and ethnicity is 0.2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.9% Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, 4.3% Black or African American, 14.6% Hispanic, 3.5% Multiracial, 72.8% White, and 0.8% Unknown (UNG, 2020c).

UNG is the only university with a CAMP program serving migrant college students in Georgia's north region. There is no CAMP program between the University of North Georgia and the state of Maryland. The next CAMP program in the northeastern U.S. corridor is Salisbury University, located in Salisbury, Maryland (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). The CAMP program's physical space at UNG is on the Gainesville Campus in Oakwood, Georgia, Hall County (UNG, 2020b). The CAMP program's current physical space allows the CAMP team to deliver and facilitate the migrant population in Gainesville, Georgia, with support services. All student advisement, coaching, mentoring, and monthly meetings are on the Gainesville campus (UNG, 2020b). The CAMP's location is unique because of Gainesville, Georgia, sizeable Latinx population. Gainesville, Georgia population is approximately 42,296, and about 41% are

Latinx, 39% are White – non-Hispanic, 16 are Black – non-Hispanic, and 2% are Asians (U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, 2020).

### **Data Collection**

The data collection section describes the approval and consent procedures to conduct the research. This section also covers the data collection and sampling procedures, as well as participant selection.

#### **Approval to Conduct Study**

The researcher handled confidential information per an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) plan. After obtaining approval from the IRB, the present study maintained compliance with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and regulations to ensure human subject protection. See Appendix A for Valdosta State University's (VSU) IRB documents.

#### **Consent to Participate**

The recruitment of participants began upon IRB approval. See Appendix A for IRB Approval. An initial email communication introduced the researcher and included information on the study's purpose. This email also invited participants to participate in the research. Another email consisted of participants who agreed to participate in the study for an individual meeting using the Zoom video platform. Conducting virtual interviews via Zoom was most appropriate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before scheduling the individual interviews, participants signed a consent form. Each participant created pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and use when sharing their experiences during the research process. Safeguarding the identity of the participants is essential to protect their right to privacy, identities to remain confidential, and not

disclose their identities (Seidman, 2013). In addition, before each interview, the researcher verbally read an abbreviated version of the informed consent and asked the participant to consent verbally. Reading the informed consent lets the participants know about the study's purpose and confidentiality. See Appendix B for the informed consent form and Appendix C for the verbal consent script.

### **Sampling Procedures and Participant Selection**

Building rapport with participants during the initial contact and subsequent interviews is critical to the study (Seidman, 2013). Thus, sharing this study's purpose with participants was essential to building rapport and establishing a relationship. Disseminating the study's purpose with the Director of the UNG CAMP program and the counselors was also necessary to obtain their buy-in, support, clarify logistics, and discuss any concerns. The Director of CAMP and counselors handled the distribution of information, such as the research project advertisement (see Appendix D), to CAMP participants. The researcher requested the CAMP Director forward the study announcement to CAMP participants. The CAMP personnel were also instrumental in distributing the recruitment email and study's disclosure to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and avoid non-compliant issues.

The research sample involved purposeful and criterion sampling strategies to ensure participants enrolled in the CAMP program were involved in the study. Combining both sampling strategies is appropriate to explore and obtain an in-depth understanding of the research. Qualitative studies usually involve small sample sizes that are purposefully selected and illuminative (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling provides information-rich qualitative data about individuals' experiences, and criterion sampling

seeks individuals who share similar experiences and specific criteria (Patton, 2015). The selection of the interested participants relied upon their self-report responses. To qualify for the study, the participants had the following requirements: (1) CAMP students who have completed at least 12-credit hours, both male and female; (2) they must be first-generation migrant college students; (3) U.S. citizens or permanent residents; and (4) parents are seasonal or migrant farmworkers who have worked in the past 24 months in a migrant seasonal farm work environment.

The sample size depends on the research, its purpose, its credibility, the ability of participants to communicate their experiences, and how the information learned can be helpful (Patton, 2015). The participants reflected on their experiences, shared their opinions, unpacked their stories, and gave in-depth meaning; for these reasons, eight participants were appropriate for the present study. The in-depth interviews of participants who have similar experiences added tremendous strength to their stories; therefore, interviewing fewer participants than eight or ten can complicate analyzing and interpreting the interview data (Seidman, 2013). The interviews of the participants ceased once the study results reached data saturation, and no new themes emerged (Patton, 2015).

There are 35 UNG CAMP participants per year transitioning into their first year of college (U.S. DoEd, 2020b). Due to the limited number of CAMP participants at UNG, the small sample size is appropriate for the present study. During the selection process, potential participants had to display an interest in the study to ensure participation in the interview (Seidman, 2013). Only eight participants were interested in



the study, and each met the criteria. The selected participants showed a balance between not being too eager or reluctant to participate (Seidman, 2013).

## **Interviews**

The researcher's goal was to conduct an in-depth interview, understand and seek the participant's perspectives on their experience, and make meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). Participants were scheduled for individual interviews using Zoom video communication software. Conducting interviews via the video teleconferencing platform Zoom is the best approach due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Zoom to collect qualitative interviews is an acceptable method to build connections with the participants while simultaneously recording sessions and capturing the researcher's observations (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey & Lawless, 2019).

An open-ended question approach captured participants' experiences rather than quantitative surveys; therefore, the researcher is part of the study to interact with participants during the interviews and collect data (Maxwell, 2013). Hence, the researcher engaged with participants and narrated their stories and experiences (Seidman, 2013). In addition, the open-ended question approach provided the context and reconstructed the meaning of the participants' experiences (Seidman, 2013). Presented in Table 2 are the eight participants' self-disclosures of their brief demographic information and descriptive ethnicity.

Experimental mortality and experimenter effect may threaten the data collection and the research's data analysis as participants can drop out or participants may not return for another interview (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen Irvine, & Walker, 2019). Nevertheless, because participants may not return to complete separate interviews, one 90-minute semi-

structured interview session is the most appropriate approach to retain participants. The purpose of the 90-minute interview approach allows participants to reconstruct their experiences and put them into the context of their lives, and make meaning to their experiences (Seidman, 2013).

Patton (2015) characterized the investigator's role as gaining access to the study participants by capturing their experiential and behavioral experiences, opinions and, values, feelings and learning about their knowledge, sensory, and demographic. The research used a list of guiding open-ended questions (see Appendix C) to ask the participants. The guiding questions apply to the participants' family backgrounds and educational backgrounds. The questions also relate to the experiences and involvement with the CAMP program. These questions allowed participants to describe and identify their experiences as CAMP students and ascertain their perception of how the CAMP program shaped their identity development and self-authorship.

Chapter four describes the narrative for each participant based on the information shared in the interviews. The researcher recorded and noted the verbal communication and constructed their answers during the semi-structured interview. The researcher took handwritten notes during the interview to record essential reactions, laughter, and expressions and highlight important ideas that may return later. The researcher kept a journal and memos to document their thoughts, feelings, and observations of the participants. Further, the researcher remained open to the idea of emerging themes and created follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. The follow-up questions clarified and probed additional details in the interview.

The goal of the interview was to capture the context and the reconstruction and meaning of participants' experiences (Seidman, 2013). Using Seidman's (2013) interviewing approach, the guided open-ended question (see Appendix C) captured rich descriptive data during the interviews. To understand the context of the participants' experiences, questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities. The reconstruction and meaning of participants' experiences were followed with questions 12-26, which asked about their experiences and perceptions as migrant students who participated in a CAMP program at a PWI. The questions focused on what factors participants perceived to be most helpful with their academic success. Lastly, the questions also focused on developing their identity and self-authorship in a PWI academic environment. The semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility to explore in-depth vital areas to generate accounts connected to the participant's past, present, and future (Patton, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

Making sense of qualitative analysis entails reducing and sorting important information, identifying significant patterns, and constructing an open-ended framework to communicate and reveal the essence of the data (Patton, 2015). The data collected from each recorded Zoom interview was transcribed, coded, and labeled. The researcher also recorded the Zoom interview using an Apple iPhone as a backup method to ensure data collection. The transcription process began immediately after each interview, and the researcher verified the transcriptions from the recorded Zoom video communication. The collected data, transcripts, audio recording, and videoconferencing taping were

safely stored using an alias to ensure participants' confidentiality and data protection (Creswell, 2014).

Saldaña (2016) recommended beginning preliminary coding and jotting once the researcher collects data. The researcher kept a journal and written memos to document the participants' thoughts, feelings, and observations (Peshkin, 1988). The researcher recorded occurrences, participants' experiences, and reflections with memos. Writing memos is a valuable technique for developing ideas, guiding, reflecting, and making sense of the data (Maxwell, 2013). The memos were titled, labeled, and grouped to identify keywords or phrases and identify emerging themes. Data analysis is an ongoing process during qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher compared the individual participants' data and identified similarities or differences with the qualitative analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

For data analysis to capture the in-depth experiences described in the narrative inquiry interviews, an appropriate approach was to use the Labovian model coding method (Saldaña, 2016). The Labovian model is the most suitable for interpreting, identifying, and coding themes and making meaning of the data collected (Saldaña, 2016). The Labovian model consists of six elements that are: (1) abstract; (2) orientation; (3) complicating action; (4) evaluation; (5) resolution; and (6) coda. Table 1 presents the six elements of the Labovian model analyzed each participant's narrative to understand their pre-college and CAMP experiences and comprehend how these experiences shaped their identities. This model constructed the participants' narratives and transcripts into clauses and then organized each clause into one of the six elements of the Labovian model (Saldaña, 2016). This process also constructed the oral narratives of

individuals by summarizing the transcripts and comparing verbal sequences, placing these sequences into clauses, and categorizing each clause into one of the six components of the Labovian model (Saldaña, 2016). The Labovian model elements highlighted the actual words and meaning from participants' voices and captured specific words and phrases to make meaning of their experiences (Saldaña, 2016). The use of the six elements model's overall purpose was to capture descriptive components to create a unique story illustrating how migrant students make meaning to their experiences in a CAMP program at a PWI.

Saldaña (2016) affirmed that the Labovian model coding is suitable for exploring participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal narratives and experiences through storytelling. The researcher analyzed the participants' narratives to capture a rich, detailed description of the participant's life and highlighted the participant's transformation progress. The researcher used a fluid inquiry approach to analyze data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The fluid inquiry approach gained insight into participants' stories in narrative inquiry. Participants actively engaged in the study and reflected on their experiences. In addition, the researcher recorded observations through a thorough reading of the transcripts and extensive journaling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher wrote memos during the narrative analysis and transcriptions, as it is vital in the narrative stories and inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For the initial data analysis, the researcher created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet codebook to organize the six elements of the Labovian model. The researcher applied Creswell's (2014) guide and protocol to construct the data, which entails reading through the information, coding the data, and developing a description and thematic analysis from the codes. The

Labovian model was applied to all transcripts to collect the participants' stories, lived experiences and identify themes throughout the data collection. Organizing the data with an excel spreadsheet to organize the six elements of the Labovian model is valuable in highlighting the participants' words and meanings and capturing specific phrases from the interviews (Saldaña, 2016).

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

Maxwell (2013) identified researcher bias and reactivity are two validity threats to a qualitative study. Implementing strategies to address validity threats is significant to the research. To strengthen the findings' credibility, the researcher acknowledged their subjectivity and personal biases affecting the data collection and analysis.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are trustworthiness criteria and assist with validity (Patton, 2015). The credibility of the research and interpretation of the findings rely on thorough attention to establishing trustworthiness (Patton, 2015). Credibility is the first criterion for establishing trustworthiness with data analysis and demonstrating the truth of the research findings (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Transferability is the second criterion in constructing trustworthiness (Patton, 2015). Transferability provided sufficient information on the study, generalized its findings, and applied them to other situations and contexts (Patton, 2015). The third criterion is the study's dependability (Patton, 2015). Dependability ensures the research process is relevant, accountable, and documented (Patton, 2015). The last criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability to establish consistency with data and its interpretations. Confirmability combines the assertions of the study's findings and its interpretations and ensures the data are discernable (Patton, 2015).

The researcher's background, experience, skills, emotions, cultural sensitivity, and relationships with their participants influence the credibility of the research findings (Patton, 2015). It is essential to investigate the researcher's inner being and understand its biases. The researcher continuously sought to identify their subjectivity, perceptions, and reactions to other populations, both positive and negative. The experimenter effect can also influence the researcher's expectations or the characteristics of the study (Ary et al., 2019). Creswell (2014) explained how maintaining objectivity in a study is essential in competent inquiry. The researcher constantly examined their methods and conclusions for bias. Another attempt to minimize threats is identifying and comprehending subjectivities throughout the research process and documenting the researcher's reactions and feelings during data collection and analysis (Peshkin, 1988).

### **Researcher Bias**

Maxwell (2013) posited the many aspects of the researcher's life and subjectivity offer a significant source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks. The researcher's self-awareness of experiential and personal knowledge is vital to the research (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher is not an expert on underrepresented groups or other cultural groups and must be aware of biased views and personal perceptions. Transparency of the researcher's experiential role working with underserved students will not be a validity threat to the study. The researcher's junior career in academia started as an English and Spanish Bilingual Admissions Counselor at a Community College. The researcher recruited inner-city high school students to apply for college. In addition, the researcher provided high school students with individual and group counseling in Spanish and English on career goals and academic support services available in tutoring and

mentoring. The researcher also provided high school students assistance with the Financial Aid Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA) application process. In this capacity, the researcher coordinated college visits and tours and invited parents to learn about educational opportunities, the college admission process, academic and financial services. The researcher's outreach initiative was to have students and parents understand the significance of pursuing higher education and attaining a college degree.

The stories of the high school students' financial and academic struggles the researcher once recruited from the inner cities were very familiar to the researcher's life experiences. The researcher would repeatedly tell inner-city high students that four years of a college education can benefit 40 years of their working life. The researcher has personally experienced and professionally witnessed the challenges of the educational sacrifice to pursue postsecondary education. Still, the researcher has celebrated many students who overcame adversity and earned college degrees. Many of the researcher's students were determined to persevere and completed their postsecondary education despite the challenges. The researcher's continuous self-awareness of these personal and student experiences did not influence the participants in the study.

In 2015, the researcher relocated to Georgia to work in an institute of higher education (IHE). Eventually, the researcher transitioned into a position at a university in the northern region of Georgia. At this university, the researcher immediately discovered that the student demographics were different from what was once familiar. The researcher was now learning about the dynamics of the students from migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families. Learning about the migrant students' challenges was impactful, and it was the impetus for the study. Immediately, the researcher



recognized how the migrant population was also underrepresented, underserved, and experienced multiple barriers. The researcher's life experiences have taken many turns, and now the researcher found an interest in learning about the migrant students. At this point of the researcher's academic career, the researcher realized a need to focus the study on the migrant students participating in a College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

Throughout the study, it was essential to look into the researcher's inner being and understand personal biases. The researcher continuously asked how the study is subjective to the realities based on the researcher's experiences with other populations. The researcher wrote memos to describe personal reactions, both positive and negative opinions, and explain how they view and perceive the migrant students' experiences.

### **Member-Checking and Triangulation**

Maxwell (2013) deliberated member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing respondent validation and credibility. To rule out any misinterpretation regarding the meaning of what participants may say or express, member checking can implore feedback about the data collected and from the participants (Creswell, 2014). In addition, to ensure data accuracy, the researcher recorded emergent patterns and possible themes, documented and labeled all interviews, filled gaps in the data collected, and protected and secured the data collected. Furthermore, the researcher reexamined the interviews and decided on the best qualitative analysis software. The researcher dedicated time for data analysis, clarified and determined analysis strategy, monitored the participants' thought process and decision-making criteria and kept an analytical journal. The researcher also presented the transcripts to each participant to confirm accuracy.

This process allowed the participants to review their stories and add validation to the analysis. The method of member checking offers an opportunity for participants to comment on the findings from the interview (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher applied triangulation to identify and analyze the data (Patton, 2015). The triangulation techniques strengthen the study's credibility and validity by transcribing all interviews and requesting participants review them for feedback and consistency. The triangulation process also addressed possible threats specific to the study and examined all sources when forming my patterns and themes (Creswell, 2014). Finally, the data triangulation transpired using various methods, such as the coding and findings from the interviews, observations, journals, and memos, to increase reliability, trustworthiness, and validity (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

### **Limitations**

The study was limited to virtual interviews via Zoom instead of in-person interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research relied primarily on reflections and experiences shared by participants as CAMP students during the interviews. Past reflections about participants' earlier experiences were retrospective. Participants did not accurately recall details regarding earlier experiences that may provide the researcher with additional insight into their experiences.

### **Delimitations**

The scope of the study only involved the experiences of migrant students who participated in the CAMP program. The qualitative research limited participants to CAMP students who have completed at least 12-credit hours. Although migrant students shared their experiences, the data collection and analysis did not apply to other student

populations and higher education institutions. Different barriers and themes emerged from the migrant students' interviews. However, the research focused on the migrant students' barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals.

### **Researcher Interviewer**

The researcher serves as the primary instrument in qualitative research, and disclosing the researcher's role and relationship to the study is vital in conducting the research (Maxwell, 2013). Accordingly, sharing the purpose of the study and any personal or professional connections with the study is essential to qualitative research. The connection to the topic is not closely related to migrant students. However, the association developed through the implementation and stewardship of the CAMP program grant. The researcher's current role as a Grants and Contracts Administrator is to maintain compliance with federal grant-funded programs and implement transformative funding programs to increase student achievement, retention, and graduation. Once the university received its first five-year federally funded competitive grant to support the CAMP program, it was crucial to successfully implement the CAMP program and educate the campus community about the CAMP initiatives. The researcher's role as the Grants and Contracts Administrator is to increase the knowledge of the CAMP program and incorporate the CAMP program's set values, goals, and objectives, and create a relationship with faculty, administrators, and staff.

The researcher's current role as a Grants and Contracts Administrator is to work directly with faculty, administrators, and staff on external grants and oversee active grant-funded programs. Offering guidance in all matters related to the university, sponsored

policies for post-award grant activities regarding acceptable management practices, and ensuring proposals and awards comply with the university's internal policies and funding agencies' regulations. The researcher does not recruit, review student applications, or decide on students' acceptance into the CAMP program. The clarification and distinction that the researcher is not directly involved nor directly interacts with undergraduate students, graduate students and the CAMP students at the university are crucial to the study.

### **Summary**

Recounting narratives is a significant way individuals have made sense of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). The research methods outlined for the study are to accomplish the goals of understanding and present the life stories of migrant students and make meaning of their experiences at a PWI. Additionally, the narrative inquiry research design narrated the stories and experiences of migrant students in a CAMP program. Ultimately, the narrative inquiry approach defined the migrant students' perspective within a social construct and provided them with an awareness of their CAMP program experiences. The researcher collected data on the CAMP students' experience from semi-structured interviews. The study's results will contribute to the literature on the CAMP program by make meaning of the migrant students' experiences and elevate their voices in pursuing a college education. The Labovian model coding method for the data analysis categorized themes in the transcripts, compared verbal sequences, and compared the connections across the participants' oral narratives. Chapter four will discuss the research results findings, including students' demographic data and narrative excerpts for each participant.

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESULTS**

A college education is immensely valuable, and it is the vehicle to improve economic and social status (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). However, pursuing a postsecondary education degree for many migrants and seasonal farmworker families is unattainable (Nuñez, 2009). The educational and financial barriers migrants and seasonal farmworker families experience can impede them from seeking higher education (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). To address these barriers, in 1972, the U.S. Department of Education established the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) as a one-year college program to provide financial support and academic resources to assist migrant students (Willison & Jang, 2009). The CAMP program assists qualified migrant students enrolled in the first year of their undergraduate program with application materials, tuition, housing assistance, and commuter expenses (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). CAMP participants receive support with academic advising, tutoring, English Language Learner assistance, counseling assistance, internships, and scholarship opportunities (Araujo, 2011; Willison & Jang, 2009).

With the growing migrant population in Georgia, there is a need to provide awareness on how migrant students characterize their experiences in the CAMP program at a predominately PWI in the south. For institutions of higher education to better serve and address the growing migrant population's needs, exploring the lived experiences of how migrant students perceive their experience in the CAMP program is crucial and necessary. Furthermore, the literature lacks studies examining how migrant students

process their identity development and develop their personal growth and knowledge during their first year in the CAMP program.

The narratives of each migrant student empowered their voices as they described their perspectives and experiences in a CAMP program at a PWI. Each participant expressed their memories and feelings and compared them to their experiences in the CAMP program. The following research questions serve as a guide for this dissertation.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

The research questions were the foundation for conducting interviews with eight participants. Only eight participants were interested in the study, and each met the criteria. The 90-minute semi-structured interview session illuminated the participants lived experiences through their lenses. The open-ended question approach provided the context and reconstructed the meaning of the participants' experiences (Seidman, 2013). The guiding open-ended questions (see Appendix C) led to a discussion on how each migrant student experienced participating in the CAMP program and how previous experiences helped shape their desire to pursue postsecondary education.

The participants in this study were from diverse cultural backgrounds. One migrant student disclosed being born in Myanmar, one migrant student was born in Guatemala, and one migrant student was born in El Salvador. Five migrant students identified themselves as having Mexican origins. Below are excerpts of the migrant students' narratives from the interviews and placing their stories using the researcher's lens.

## **Development of Themes**

The six elements of the Labovian model analyzed each participant's narrative to understand their pre-college and CAMP experiences and comprehend how these experiences shaped their identities. This model constructed the participants' narratives and transcripts into clauses and then organized each clause into one of the six elements of the Labovian model that are: (1) abstract; (2) orientation; (3) complicating action; (4) evaluation; (5) resolution; and (6) coda (Saldaña, 2016). The themes that emerged from the analyses of each participant's narratives organized their stories and experiences.

### **Ashley: "Tienes Que Ser Alguien"**

#### **Profile and History**

The oldest of five siblings, Ashley, was from Cornelia, Georgia. Ashley grew up with both parents in the household, with her father being the primary provider. She lived with both parents, one sister, and three brothers. Her youngest brother was four years old. Ashley's mother was 39 years old, and her father was 41. Ashley's father worked in the poultry plant in Cornelia, Georgia. She recalled both parents did not complete elementary school.

#### **Pioneering CAMP**

Ashley recollected her first interaction with the CAMP recruiter. She recounted how the CAMP recruiter visited her high school and told her she qualified for the CAMP program at the University of North Georgia (UNG). She remembered that "At first, when I met with the CAMP recruiter, I was unsure how I could qualify for CAMP and how she knew about my family work history." Ashley further explained that she did not know much about the CAMP program and the opportunities:

The CAMP recruiter talked to me and told me about the CAMP program. She said I qualified, but I did not know how I qualified. I didn't realize there was such a thing as a migrant student. It was confusing because I didn't know what a migrant student meant. I thought that it was crazy she had all this information about me. I would have never thought that. I asked the CAMP recruiter where you got that information. The CAMP recruiter explained how the high school listed me as a migrant student and had information that my father worked in the fields harvesting crops. The CAMP recruiter was friendly and nice. I gave her my contact information, and she stayed in contact with me.

Ashley additionally explained how the CAMP recruiter constantly communicated via text to assist her with the application process by explaining, "The CAMP recruiter would always text me when she was visiting my school to schedule a meeting and would text me about the status of my application." The CAMP recruiter's contact and text updates began Ashley's journey as a CAMP student and knowledge of her migrant background.

The CAMP recruiter's visit prompted Ashley to talk with her parents about the CAMP program and asked her father about his work history. She was unaware of her father's work history and what he did for a living:

I talked to my father about the CAMP recruiter and how the school knew he worked in agriculture. It turned out he did have jobs in the crop fields before working in the poultry industry. He worked in New Jersey during the harvesting season, harvesting grapes, and in Florida harvesting oranges.



Ashley concluded because of CAMP she learned that her father worked in agriculture when she was a young girl. She did not remember that he worked harvesting crops, which qualified her for the CAMP program. Ashley described that she lived in a decent home, and her parents could provide for the family. Her father was the only parent that works at home, and she emphasized how valuable it was to receive financial aid and financial assistance from CAMP in her first year of college. She continued to say:

My father is the only one working in our family, and the scholarship opportunity CAMP offered helped my decision to attend UNG.

The CAMP program had a positive financial impact on Ashley's postsecondary education. Ashley explained CAMP's financial support was a great help for her and her father as he was the family's sole provider.

### **Cultural Awareness Journey**

Ashley's parents were born in Mexico. She described how her parents lived in a rural town in Mexico and how Cornelia, Georgia was a rural community. She stated her ethnicity as Mexican. Ashley explained how she grew up in a predominately White community in rural Georgia not with many Hispanics:

When I was younger, there weren't many Hispanics in Cornelia, Georgia. As I got older, the population's demographics changed, and there are now more Hispanics living here. But when I was growing up, there were probably 43 Hispanics in the area.

For instance, Ashley detailed how she attended a predominately White high school and did not know much about her Mexican culture or other students with similar

backgrounds because she was an honor student in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Although her father harvested crops in New Jersey and Florida as a child, Ashley felt she was “fortunate” to attend the same schools in Cornelia, Georgia, from kindergarten to high school. She regarded her high school and education experience as being “decent.” However, fitting in was difficult because she was one of the few migrant students in AP classes. Ashley voiced how the high school Hispanic students’ reactions made her feel like she did not fit into Mexican culture.

Even though during high school, Ashley did not know where she fitted in, she found her place and identity at UNG. Furthermore, Ashley described she was in “culture shock” to learn about her Mexican “roots at UNG.” As an UNG student, she gained a greater awareness of herself and her Mexican culture. She discovered herself and her identity as a Mexican-American.

### **Secondary Education Challenges and Combating Microaggressions**

Ashley described in-depth a pejorative experience during a high school football game. She accentuated her feelings about this incident, “I’m a Mexican American female and didn’t understand why people hated my people.” She continued saying:

I remember the 2016 presidential election was intense with the candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Our high school was playing a home football game against Gainesville High School. While the Gainesville high school marching band was playing and performing on the high school field, the people on the bleachers were chanting racist remarks. They were really racist towards the students from Gainesville high school. The majority of the students in the Gainesville high school marching band were Hispanic. The people from my high

school chanted over and over, *build that wall, build that wall*. Adults, maybe parents and students from my high school wearing Donald Trump t-shirts and hats with the slogan *Make America Great Again* were chanting. They were way too much, and it was terrible.

This high school experience made Ashley feel awful and ashamed. She resonated with her feeling of being a Mexican-American female student playing in the marching band at this predominately White school. She explained how she was in disbelief that people chanted humiliating remarks to the other high school students, “The incident also made me wonder what my high school peers thought of me as a Mexican-American student.”

Further, Ashley talked about another incident in her high school that made her feel terrible for not speaking up. She divulged that during this incident, she did not know how to address it or, “I didn’t speak up or ever speak up for myself.” She continued:

I remember being in the honors American Government class; this White girl commented negatively on the first lady, Michelle Obama. These mean comments about Michelle Obama’s appearance and race disturbed me. I wanted to ask her why she felt the need to talk about Michelle Obama. I kept to myself, but I wanted to tell her how much I admired Michelle Obama and how she is a brilliant woman. I wanted to speak up and say how wonderful is this woman, but I didn’t.

Moreover, Ashley remembered how she felt everything said by her fellow student was “based on opinion and racism.” She recollected her emotions of anger and questioned why the classroom teacher never asked the student the source of her information:

I wanted to ask her where she got her facts, but I didn't. I felt ashamed for not saying a word. This student was allowed to say these biased comments without anyone debating her. Everyone agreed with her discriminatory remarks.

Reminiscing on these high school experiences made Ashley angry for not speaking up about her belief and expressing how she felt. As a high school student, Ashley did not know how to handle these challenges and encounters with microaggressions.

### **Secondary Education Support and Awareness of Legal Status**

Ashley credited her college preparation to one high school teacher and her high school counselor. She remembered "My high school teacher made sure I was ready for college." This teacher wanted to ensure she knew what to expect in college. "My teacher always pushed me to do well and informed me to be ready for the course work in college." She also recalled her high school counselor was helpful when transitioning from high school to college. Her counselor also wrote letters of recommendation for her college applications. She continued saying:

It was crazy, but my Counselor was the first to ask me how I felt about going to college. She told me how many Hispanic students go to college and do not graduate college. I had never had someone tell me these facts before. She was a great help because I realized the importance of finishing my college education. I still keep in touch with my teacher, who helped me immensely in high school. I periodically email her to update her on what I am doing.

Ashley recollected how her high school counselor inquired about her legal status, and her parents' legal status while assisting her with an application. The application

required her parents' U.S. legal status and social security numbers. It was Ashley's first encounter with her legal status and her parents' legal status in the U.S.

Not knowing the legal status in the U.S. was difficult for Ashley. Ashley described her emotions of disbelief, and she "didn't know what this meant to pursue college." She shared that asking her parents for their social security numbers to complete her college application was difficult. Before asking her parents, she Googled and searched on the internet to learn about the information on social security and what it meant to be illegal in the U.S. Nevertheless, Ashley learned from her parents she was born in the U.S.

### **Seeking a Community of Belonging and Fitting In**

In 2018, Ashley graduated from high school. She mentioned how another university accepted her, but she did not want to live too far from home. "I wanted to be close to my family because I worried something would happen at home. I am the oldest, and it was difficult to leave home." Ashley explained she chose to attend UNG after speaking to a friend who was a CAMP participant. Her friend shared his experience with Ashley and explained how the program gave him a sense of community. The information he shared about the CAMP program influenced her decision to participate in the program:

I started CAMP in the Fall of 2018. Ultimately, I decided to attend UNG because I talked to a former camp student, who told me about his experience with CAMP and how supportive they were of his college education. He told me the CAMP program gave him a community of belonging and support, which he enjoyed.

Ashley started to visualize how she would feel being around people like her, supported her in college, and cared about her. She wanted to be motivated and supported by a community that genuinely liked her.

### **Parents' Educational Support and Obligations**

The obligation of the eldest sibling was not easy for Ashley to manage college and home. She explained how her parents were happy she was attaining a college degree but found it challenging with her mother. Ashley went home as often as possible to help her mother. Although Ashley was in her last semester of college and would receive her degree, she still found it hard to manage her family obligations.

Further, as the first member of her immediate family to attend college, Ashley stated how it meant a lot to pursue a college degree. She shared how her father supported her college endeavors and set the foundation to reach her goal of attaining a college degree:

My father, fortunately, is a proponent of education, and he always told us you have to be something and do more. You have to do important things with your life. He would tell me, *Tienes que ser alguien*; a common phrase they say in Mexico, which is amazing to me. It means that you have to become someone more important and reach your fullest potential in a place. Do something important with your life.

Ashley's father encouraged her to take advantage of the opportunity given to her. Ashley said, "my father wants me to work in a good place, be in charge in the workplace, and have a level of authority." Her father did not want Ashley "work in low-level positions." The support and encouragement from Ashley's father gave her the incentive

to pursue a college education. She recognized how hard he worked to support the family. The support of family was vital to Ashley's postsecondary education goals.

Additionally, Ashley clarified that she asked her parents to help and support her during college. She expressed, "I do believe in the expression that it takes a village, so I told my parents that I needed their support," and she carry on by saying:

It wasn't until college that I started to speak up and let my parents know I couldn't do this alone, and I needed their support. For me it took a whole village and having this opportunity is a big deal for my family and me.

Ashley needed her parents' support to achieve her academic success and endeavors. She added, "After speaking to my parents, they gave me the help I needed while attending college." She explained how their support was necessary for attaining a college degree.

### **Awareness of Being a Migrant Student**

Ashley noted again that she did not know there was a CAMP program for migrant students. She was not aware of the many opportunities available at the university for migrant students. The CAMP program allowed Ashley to work as a peer mentor. She felt that working in this role was a great opportunity to give back what she learned to new migrant college students:

I am grateful to be a participant in the CAMP program, and I was able to help other migrant students by coming back and being a peer mentor to them. I am happy for the opportunity and resources CAMP gave me. It was helpful.

Working as a peer mentor kept Ashley engaged in the CAMP program and with

new CAMP students on migrant issues and concerns. Ashley also gave back to the UNG community by raising awareness of migrant culture on campus. “I fully appreciate the support from CAMP and exposing me to my background.” Raising awareness of migrant students to the UNG campus was important to Ashley. She was involved in the Migrant Student Union (MSU), a student organization at UNG, and was active in promoting events showcasing the migrant culture. Ashley also served as the president of the Migrant Student Union, and she noted, “We held events representing many migrant students on campus and served food from various countries.” Her involvement as a peer mentor and an active member of MSU allowed Ashley to learn more about the migrant culture. She expressed how “grateful” CAMP was to give her the essential support to succeed in college and made her aware of the migrant community.

CAMP also encouraged Ashley to participate in activities and organizations. Ashley expounded how CAMP opened doors for her at UNG. CAMP informed her of the many opportunities offered at the university. Through CAMP, she gained an awareness of what was available. Ashley had a good experience with many of her professors, and liked all of her professors. She would also meet with her UNG Advisor regularly to discuss her courses.

### **CAMP Orientation**

CAMP provided Ashley with the “first steps” toward her college education. CAMP’s financial support allowed her to start her college education. Ashley described how her friend was right about CAMP. She portrayed the CAMP program as a “community of family and friends away from home.” She posited being ignorant about



the migrant culture before enrolling at UNG. She added, “CAMP was one of the reasons I was able to solidify my identity and fit in.”

Ashley vividly remembered her first day attending the CAMP orientation. She defined it as “shocking” to be in college with many Hispanic students. She also recalled how CAMP made her feel accepted and provided a sense of community where she belonged:

I went to a predominately White high school in north Georgia and was shocked to see many Hispanic students in the CAMP orientation. Then I remembered that Hall County, Georgia was predominantly Hispanic, and I thought I probably would not fit in because I am different. I was nervous but also excited because there were students like me going through the same experience. I remember two Asian migrant students in the CAMP orientation, but my cohort was predominantly Hispanic. We were all given the same opportunity, and I was happy to know we were in this together. We’re all trying to know each other, and we played some icebreaker games.

Furthermore, during the CAMP orientation, Ashley explained how the CAMP staff discussed the expectations and purpose of college and how they could achieve more. She elaborated on how CAMP talked about family demands and educational responsibilities:

The CAMP staff also told the students how they had to learn how to focus on their studies and prioritize their college education. They also discussed what CAMP offered migrant students and told us about the role of peer mentors to help us.

Ashley concluded that the CAMP orientation was insightful and helpful. She accentuated learning about her purpose during the CAMP orientation and gaining a sense of community and added, “The CAMP people were motivating and gave me a purpose.” Even when Ashley had those moments tired of taking classes, she knew her purpose and motivation. It was essential for her to “keep moving forward and “Withdrawing out of college was not an option for me.”

### **Postsecondary Education Challenges and Combating Microaggressions**

Ashley revealed that at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester, she had a negative experience with her new UNG Advisor. It was the first time Ashley had faced an UNG member being “rude” to her while seeking help with her education. She continued saying:

I changed my major, and I had a new Advisor. I met with the Advisor to discuss my schedule and options with graduate school. During our initial conversation, he was rude and mean to me. Since this was the first time I had a meeting with my new Advisor, I wanted to share with him what I had accomplished at UNG and how I wanted to go to graduate school.

She detailed how the Advisor did not know that she was a CAMP student and a McNair Scholar. She explained to her Advisor that the McNair Program was a grant that prepared her for post-graduate studies through performing research. Through the McNair program, she explained to the Advisor that she had to participate in research, workshops, and community activities. Ashley proudly proceeded to inform him that she received the Goizueta Foundation Scholarship.

Furthermore, Ashley told how she informed her Advisor that she was interested in

applying to the University of Texas at Austin graduate program. Ashley was disappointed in her Advisor's response that graduate programs would not know about the McNair program or the Goizueta Foundation Scholarship. Ashley mentioned during the conversation with her Advisor; that she questioned if this was a form of microaggression." She was unsure of his negative behavior towards her. "I only wanted to discuss my prospect of pursuing a graduate degree after graduating from UNG."

However, she sought support and guidance from the CAMP staff on handling the experience with her Advisor:

Fortunately, I have the support of CAMP and my peer mentor. I contacted my peer mentor because I felt terrible. I also talked to the CAMP retention coordinator about the incident. I needed somebody to talk to and express my emotions. I was surprised at the Advisor's behavior.

Ashley was upset that the Advisor's comments were offensive. "Serving on the campus diversity committee, I recognized there are still things that need to improve on-campus regarding diversity awareness." She elucidated how CAMP taught her some techniques to handle these types of incidents, but she did not remember them at the time of the incident:

The interaction with the Advisor deeply affected me. I was frustrated because I did not remember the skills, I had learned from the CAMP coaches and counselors in managing these situations. I also talked with the CAMP Director. Actually, I cried to him when I told him about the incident. The CAMP Director listened to me and encouraged me to continue pursuing my goal of attending graduate school.

Ashley felt relieved after speaking to the CAMP Director. The CAMP Director was supportive of her emotions. He told Ashley that she would face these situations, but she had control over how to react. Ashley explained how he told her not to let anyone put her down or make her feel any less of herself.

Ashley's goal was to graduate with her bachelor's degree in December 2022. She elaborated that "The support from CAMP helped reassure me that I was not overly sensitive or emotional with my negative interactions." CAMP gave Ashley a voice to speak up. "Even though that Advisor wasn't the best, I realized there will always be a bad apple." Ashley articulated that the CAMP program was the community she desired, and they were always welcoming and willing to help her.

### **Reflections**

When asked what type of student could benefit and thrive from the CAMP program, Ashley stated, "someone that has the drive to learn and get a degree in higher education." She conveyed "someone who wants to do bigger and better things." Ashley also said, "A student that will advocate for migrants could benefit from CAMP." Last, she posited, "giving a voice to those migrants that do not have a voice and providing awareness about the migrants" was essential.

Ashley articulated how many people in the CAMP program helped her and taught her about the process of college, "The CAMP program helped me with completing forms and applications. I did not have help at home to assist me with filling out forms." She communicated how she "lived a sheltered life before attending college." Ashley described that CAMP's assistance and support during her first year of college were

instrumental in her academic success. “I am glad to be part of CAMP and happy I will receive my degree.”

As Ashley reflected on her overall experience with the CAMP program, she expressed her heartfelt gratitude to CAMP for having the opportunity to graduate and receive a college degree, “I’m very proud of having the opportunity to graduate, and I want to give back to CAMP and the migrant students.” She explained she became a peer mentor to give back and share all her knowledge with the new migrant students. She gained the confidence to take the initiative to raise migrant awareness and be an active organizational leader. Ultimately, CAMP gave her the community of belonging and fitting in that she desired.

### **Daisy: “A Piece of the Puzzle that Put Everything Together”**

#### **Profile and History**

Daisy was born in Myanmar, Southeast Asia and noted, “I remember Myanmar being a beautiful country.” She grew up with both parents and was the oldest of four siblings. She had a younger sister and two younger brothers. Daisy described her ethnicity as Karen. She explained Karen was an ethnic group of Burma in Myanmar. She remembered arriving in the U.S. in 2012. She has lived in the U.S. for ten years and recalled that it was a journey to arrive in the United States. Before coming to the U.S., Daisy and her family lived in a refugee camp in Thailand. Daisy noted as a child, she lived in a refugee camp not far from her country and illustrated, “The Thailand refugee camp was on the border of Myanmar.” Daisy stated that her parents were “determined to take risks to journey to the United States because they wanted to provide their children with better opportunities.”

When Daisy and her family arrived in the U.S., they lived in a migrant community. She described that different ethnic groups of people lived in the community where she lived. Daisy remembered her community being diverse with migrant workers, and she characterized, “We had different minority groups and different ethnic groups of people in the apartments.” Prior to living in the U.S., she never knew people from other ethnicities. She elaborated that “My ethnicity is Karen and I now lived with neighbors that were from Bangladesh, some from Somalia, and various other countries.”

### **Parents Level of Education**

Her father attended school until the seventh grade, and her mother never went to school. Her grandparents on her mother’s side also did not have an education or attended school. She does not know much about her father’s parents and their level of education or if they even attended a school. Daisy left Myanmar at a young age. She was five and a half years old when she and her family left Myanmar, and they never returned. She has limited communication with relatives in her native country and explained that she was the first family member to attend and complete an education:

It’s really hard to communicate with my grandparents and family members because they live in a different countries and continents, and I now live on a different continent. See, I didn’t grow up in Myanmar, and I did not grow up with my grandparents. So, I don’t keep in contact with family members. I don’t think anyone other than me goes to school. There could be some possibility on my dad’s side, but I don’t know because I am not in contact with them.

## **Educational Challenges and Language Barrier**

Daisy attended her first year of high school in Atlanta, Georgia. She remembered, “When I first got into high school, it was like my third year in the U.S., and I could speak some English but not well.” She described that attending high school in Atlanta, Georgia was a good experience because there was a diverse ethnic group of students. She recalled there were refugee communities in the Atlanta area, and many students did not speak English. She expressed, “We kind of understood each other and communicated with our body language,” which gave her a sense of comfort, knowing other students were new to the U.S.

Then Daisy’s family moved to Athens, Georgia, and she had to transfer to another high school. Daisy’s detailed how her parents moved to Athens because the neighborhood they lived in Atlanta was not safe. She remembered, “There were drugs and gangs in our community.” Daisy conveyed that both her parents worked in the poultry industry and found work in the poultry plant in Athens, Georgia, which allowed them to relocate there. She further explained how her parents wanted the family to live in a safe environment and attend a school district that offered a better education.

The school in Athens, Georgia, turned out to be challenging for her. It was a different experience to get acclimated to the new high school. She remembered, “When I started the new high school, I realized that I needed to rely on myself and not another person.” She explained how she felt as though she was the only student in her high school that was different. Being the only student from Myanmar was not an easy transition for Daisy. She struggled in classes because of cultural differences and language barriers. Additionally, Daisy expressed how she felt she was the only student

that was different at UNG and how difficult it was to get acclimated to the college culture. When speaking about her experiences when she started UNG, she went on to say:

Like right now and at this moment, I think that I am the only student from Myanmar at the University of North Georgia too. Yes, I am the only one in this school that is from Myanmar. I don't know any other person from my country in the school.

Even though Daisy had some challenges, she acknowledged the support of two teachers. While attending school in Atlanta, Georgia, Daisy remembered her English teacher was very helpful, and her math teacher at Athens High School, helped migrant students. She reminisced how her math teacher was friendly and took the time to help her in high school. Daisy still keeps in touch with her math teacher and considers her a great mentor.

### **Family Communication**

Daisy did not share any concerns and issues she experienced in school with her parents. She clarified how she did not worry her parents about her challenges. She voiced, "No, no, no, I do not talk to my parents about my high school experience." She elaborated that instead of speaking with her parents about her concerns with her education, she would go to her external resources for advice. She relied on her church leaders for spiritual guidance and support. She had a close relationship with her math teacher. She portrayed her math teacher as a "kind" individual and stated, "My teacher was kind to me in high school and is the one I reach out to if I have problems in school."



## **The Pursuit of Higher Education**

Daisy decided to attend college soon after coming to the U.S. In seventh grade, she worked on a science class project with a classmate who also arrived in the U.S. a few years before her from Southeast Asia. Her classmate spoke English a lot more than Daisy. Daisy remembered how this classmate shared her goal of attending college to become a doctor or a nurse. She recalled, “It was the first time I even had a conversation about a college education.” However, Daisy remembered her classmate told her, “*You will never make it to college because your parents are migrant workers.*” She described how the classmate’s remarks made her feel bad. Yet somehow, the classmate’s statement about her and her parents invigorated her to pursue an undergraduate degree. The classmate’s negative remark resonated with Daisy and she voiced, “At that moment, I decided I was going to prove her wrong.” Daisy immediately decided she would attain a college education.

The path for Daisy to attain her undergraduate degree was not easy. As she expressed, there were so many times that she wanted to give up and she remembered, “I had issues with my language barrier, the growing pains of leaving home for the first time and transitioning from high school to college.” She elaborated that “All these issues gave me a lot of emotional ups and downs.” Her ultimate motivation was to make her parents “proud.”

Daisy decided to attend UNG because she thought she had no other option but to attend another four-year college. She was the oldest sibling and the first one to graduate high school in the U.S. Daisy did not have other family members to ask for recommendations on pursuing a higher education degree or where to attend college.

Daisy pointed out that some friends recommended applying to a technical college, but that was a two-year degree program, and she would have to transfer after two years. She explained, “A larger university was out of reach due to its high SAT and ACT score requirements, and the tuition was not financially affordable.” She expounded after a thorough review, she decided to apply to UNG. When asked how Daisy’s parent’s felt about her acceptance to UNG, she described them as being “proud, very proud.”

### **Parents’ Influence and Support of Education**

Daisy received her associate degree in 2020 and her bachelor’s degree in Spring of 2022. Daisy credited her parents for being a positive influence in her attaining an undergraduate degree and she explained, “My parents support all of my educational goals.” Daisy expressed how her parents always told her, “Education is the key to everything you do.” Daisy emphasized how her parents valued and prioritized her education and would do anything to support her educational pursuits. She said she was not allowed to work because her parents wanted her to focus on her studies.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Daisy learned through the math teacher about the CAMP and recalled that it was through a friend that she was able to meet with the CAMP recruiter. Daisy described she felt relieved and happy to know there was a program like CAMP to assist migrant students. She continued saying:

I introduced myself to the CAMP recruiter and told her about my ethnicity and how I lived in a refugee camp. She went on to ask me what my parents do for work. I responded that my parents work in poultry, where most parents work with no English. So that’s how I was able to get the application to apply for CAMP.

Daisy detailed how relieved she felt from the stress of starting college. She said, “I didn’t know anything about college and what I had to do or how to apply for FAFSA or how I would pay for college.” She elaborated that she did not know how to register for classes, and CAMP helped her. CAMP assisted Daisy during her first year of college. Daisy “was happy and excited to get the help.”

### **CAMP Orientation**

Daisy remembered the first day of the CAMP orientation. She reminisced about what she was wearing, and how happy she was to meet a male student that spoke her language. Daisy explained, “I was nervous but happy that a student spoke my language in the CAMP orientation, even though there was a gender difference.” She continued to explain, “Unfortunately, the male student dropped out of UNG and the CAMP program,” Daisy said the following when talking about her experiences on the first day of the CAMP orientation:

I was nervous and thought these other students spoke Spanish, and I didn’t. The mentors and the other CAMP staff also spoke Spanish. I asked myself — am I really in the right place? You know, but at the same time, I made some friends that day. I met students that also attended the same high school I attended. We were assigned to live in the same apartment, and they were my housemates. We lived together and took the same classes during our first year at UNG, which was really nice.

Daisy also disclosed that studying and living with the cohort of CAMP students in her first year of college made her nervous initially. She eventually felt more comfortable with her roommates and other CAMP students.

## **Postsecondary Education Challenges**

In the Fall of 2018, Daisy started UNG as a CAMP student. Daisy mentioned that there were times when she wanted to take a break from her undergraduate studies:

I wanted to take a break but did not want to drop out of school. I just wanted to take a break because I was tired of struggling in school to learn. Since English is not my first language, I had to work harder on my class assignments. I had to learn my coursework and also learn English at the same time. I was tired, and then I thought I could never think of dropping out because not everyone has this opportunity to attend college. I realized I would do everything to hold on, even to the last straw to be in college.

Daisy remembered her first semester at UNG was very challenging. She explained since she does not have an extravert personality and her communication skills were not that great, she had a very difficult time with classes. She revealed, “I was struggling because I was not getting an ‘A’ or a ‘B,’ and getting a ‘C’ grade was pulling me down. So, I decided to talk to the CAMP counselor and get help.” The CAMP counselor encouraged her to be proactive, email the professor, and ask for assistance with the class. The CAMP staff also emailed the professor in advance to make them aware that Daisy was a CAMP student and that she was contacting them to set a time to meet. CAMP initiated the contact between Daisy and the professor but informed her that she would have to learn how to approach and communicate with professors in the future. She also learned how to interact with classmates.

Being a migrant student at UNG was valuable for Daisy. The first year of college was also challenging for Daisy because she had difficulty learning how to make friends.

Nevertheless, she also described how challenging it was to be away from family and expressed, “Asian families are very close and are always together.” Daisy further clarified that being away in college was challenging because her parents did not understand why she had to live on campus.

### **Extended Family**

Daisy described CAMP as her “extended family.” When she needed advice or someone to talk to about her stressful experiences, she would go and speak to the CAMP counselor. Daisy mentioned how she would always approach the CAMP counselor by saying, “Oh, I’m stressed about this …” Sometimes, after talking to the CAMP counselor, Daisy would realize that it was okay and that she had the skills to handle the situation. She divulged, “I would get more suggestions and resources from the CAMP counselor.” Daisy also stated, “The CAMP staff understood my problems and stress; they are my extended family away from home.”

Daisy called “CAMP the backbone that pushed me for success.” She explained how CAMP had monthly meetings, and every CAMP student had to attend these meetings. There were also cultural events CAMP students also had to participate. CAMP would invite guest speakers to present to the CAMP students. The CAMP program helped Daisy academically with her coursework and she revealed, “If it was not because of CAMP, I don’t know if I would make it this far in this short amount of time.” CAMP monitored her class grades and constantly asked if she needed help with assignments. CAMP provided Daisy with a math tutor, and a science tutor was available if she needed help. She continued to say, “With CAMP, I could register early and get all my courses. I learned to submit my FAFSA applications early. So CAMP was helpful.”

Moreover, Daisy explained how CAMP encouraged her to be more social and build new relationships. She described, “CAMP would bring new people to talk to us, and some of them had the same interests I had, and others had different interests, but it was nice to get to know them.”

As a migrant student at UNG, Daisy expressed that at the beginning of the CAMP program, she felt she did not “belong.” She felt different from the other students at UNG because of her language barrier. Her language and accent were intimidating for her to participate in class discussions. However, by the end of her four years of undergraduate studies, she felt more comfortable with her language barrier and identity. Daisy came to realize her accomplishments as a college student. She continued saying:

At the beginning of college, I would shut myself down like I did not want to do this anymore. I felt embarrassed and would question myself. I am in college, and my English is still not good. But right now, at this present moment, I feel proud. I know I am not the same as other students, but I learned that it is ok to be me. I have excelled in a new setting, and I made it, you know, I could go so far; that is why I am here now.

Despite the cultural differences and language barriers, eventually, Daisy made friends with her cohort of CAMP students. She highlighted how she was able to share her experiences with the CAMP students. She expressed how CAMP supported her with challenges and carry on by saying:

I made good friends with other CAMP students I met during orientation and the first day of CAMP. Now we stay together and talk about some of the major stuff

we experience. I also have the CAMP support to help and guide me, so I don't have to worry about my challenges.

Daisy's language barrier did not stop her from achieving a college education. She expressed, "Because of who I am, I was able to be where I am today and come this far." Although the process and journey to attaining her degree were challenging at times, she overcame the obstacles and developed her sense of self and identity.

### **Motivation to Pursue a College Degree**

Daisy described her motivation to pursue her college degree was because of "The love of my parents and my family." She described her family's sacrifice and their laborious work and carry on by saying:

My family, you know, work in poultry. They come home from work with backaches, body aches, headaches, and all those pains. They also tell me how their hands and fingers ache. Sometimes their nose and their eyes are also irritated. They work with chickens all day and are standing up all day. They also have problems with the nerves in their legs and issues with their knees.

Daisy articulated how she wanted to fulfill her parents' dreams by receiving an education. Her family and parents motivated her to move forward with her college education even when she experienced challenges.

### **CAMP Support**

The CAMP team invited Daisy to work as a peer mentor for the CAMP students. She learned how essential CAMP was to her education and the opportunities it provides. She would tell the CAMP students that were her mentees to "Hold onto the opportunities CAMP offers." She also emphasized to the new CAMP students that she understood that

“Being a first-generation student is hard but having these support services from the CAMP program was valuable.” She mentioned how disappointing it was for her when a CAMP student did not turn in their class assignments or complete their work and carry on by saying:

There’s no way a student should be behind their school work with all the support CAMP gives. I would tell students that didn’t hand in their school work; I don’t know how they could do this? Because not everyone gets these opportunities that they are having right now. I don’t understand why they don’t want to hold on to this precious support they get from CAMP.

Daisy shared with new CAMP students that she could relate to them and understand how “tough it is and how they experience hard times in college.” She would advise students to take advantage of the opportunity provided by CAMP. Ultimately, Daisy expressed, she wanted the migrant students to succeed in college.

The CAMP staff support encouraged and demonstrated how proud they were of Daisy completing college. She revealed, “The CAMP counselors were there and listened to me and provided emotional support,” and went on to say:

The CAMP staff is proud of me because they knew my struggles throughout my four college years. They would hug and encourage me by telling me I would do well. Their encouragement made me feel good. I no longer feel intimidated or feel like I am not good enough. I now know that I am good enough. It feels so good to come this far.

Daisy credited CAMP for her successful experience with college. She elaborated



that “All the CAMP staff worked together and gave me support. They were the ones that helped me get through these four years of college.” She continued to say, “CAMP was a piece of the puzzle that put everything together.” CAMP was a positive impact on Daisy’s college experience. CAMP also helped Daisy learn how to budget her finances and understand the cost and responsibility of tuition.

### **Staying Engaged with CAMP and the Campus Migrant Community**

The Migrant Student Union on campus was an organization Daisy was actively involved. She explained that the Migrant Student Union organization members were migrant students who want to stay engaged with each other. The organization allowed them to share and discuss their experiences as migrant students. Daisy told, “We have different students participate, and there are different events each week or month.” MSU offered volunteering opportunities and gets involved with charities. Daisy was also active with the CAMP cohort meetings and she mentioned:

I think it is a mandatory meeting for currently enrolled CAMP students. We have other students participate, and they announce events, deadlines, and stuff like that. In the cohort meeting, you also get to meet other CAMP students. That’s when you realize these students have similar or the same experiences as I do. It also provides CAMP students a sense of belonging and family; I know I have a family with CAMP.

Daisy recounted how she attended the cohort meetings throughout her four years of college. She expressed how she looked forward to listening to the guest speakers and hearing some of the questions students have and she went on to say:

When you step into college, you already have a group of people who have the same interest or the same history or story as you. Not all students have the opportunity to attend the first day of class and know other students are just like you. As CAMP students, we were always together during the first year of college.

During the first year of CAMP, Daisy was enrolled in the same courses with the same professors as her CAMP cohort. Taking the same classes, living together, and attending CAMP events together was an excellent experience for Daisy. She conveyed, “This experience was beneficial to building relationships with other CAMP students, and we had a built-in family.”

### **Reflections**

Daisy expounded that “anyone who values education could thrive in a CAMP program.” She stressed the importance and value of an education and continued to say:

I am an individual who puts my education first, and I didn’t want to waste the opportunity CAMP gave me. Don’t waste these opportunities if you are not committed to your education. So only those students who value education will benefit from the CAMP program.

In closing, Daisy reflected on how CAMP allowed her to work as a peer mentor. The experience she gained working as a mentor built her confidence and leadership skills. CAMP gave Daisy the skills and tools to develop her self-confidence and become a leader. Through CAMP, she gained a sense of belonging and learned to embrace her language barriers. She was proud of her academic accomplishments and success.

## **Gilbert: “It Gives Me an Edge to be a Migrant Student”**

### **Profile and History**

Raised in Ellijay, Georgia, Gilbert described how he was from the mountains in a small, predominantly White community. He also said that migrant workers from Guatemala and other Hispanic ethnicities lived in his community because they worked in the nearby poultry plant. He lived with both parents, a younger sister who was ten years old and a younger brother who was 15 years old. His mother was a teacher, and his father was a mechanic at the local poultry plant. He shared that “I grew up in a small community, so everyone knew each other.” He defined living in the small community as “hard,” and he characterized it as “A place where it’s hard to live in because of my background.” He had not moved to other towns and states and went on to say, “The only other place I visit is Texas, where all my extended family lives.” Gilbert was an honor student from kindergarten to the 12th grade. He told, “I took honors classes and stayed with the same White students throughout my 12 years of school.”

Both Gilbert’s parents are from Crystal City, Texas. He stated that Crystal City, Texas “is right next to the Mexican border.” His family lived 30 or 45 minutes away from the border of Mexico, and the U.S. Gilbert’s father was born in Coahuila, Mexico, and came to the U.S. when he was a year or two years old. He revealed that his parents “Identify themselves as Texan Mexicans and are both Hispanic.”

### **Parents Level of Education**

His mother worked in special education for many years and was teaching kindergarten. Gilbert’s mother received a master’s degree and was currently working on an advanced teaching certification. Gilbert was uncertain but believed his father had an

Associate degree. His father attended a technical school and received his certification as a mechanical technician. Moreover, he explained how his parents had stable jobs and raised their family in Ellijay, Georgia. He continued to say, “Luckily, I didn’t have to move around a lot growing up, but I feel like living in Ellijay held me back.”

### **Secondary Education Challenges and Combating Microaggressions**

Gilbert articulated how he did not have a positive experience in the Ellijay school system. He felt that he did not receive a good high school education. Gilbert discerned his teachers were “condescending” towards him. He expressed how he was perplexed by his high school experience and often questioned what happened to him during his four years at a predominately White high school. He explained that:

I tried to push myself further with learning. Even more in high school to better prepare me for college. I would speak with my teachers about participating in the Dual Enrollment Program versus taking AP classes, but they were not helpful.

Due to the delayed response from his high school advisor, Gilbert stated that he eventually lost the motivation to learn about the Dual Enrollment Program. As he recollected these memories, he sounded disappointed that he did not get guidance in the Dual Enrollment program.

Gilbert remembered and voiced his conflicted emotions towards his experiences while attending high school and shared that “I feel like some of my teachers didn’t like me because I wasn’t one of the best honor students in high school.” He continued to say, “I enjoyed arts and crafts, and I would find inspiration working on a project.” He vividly remembered his high school experience with two teachers, which still resonates with him:

My teacher assigned a project to create an image using graphing software to include ellipses, ovals, circles, and different formulas. I used the software to create a picture, which I thought was awesome. The assignment took me seven hours to complete. I sat in front of the computer and did all this work. I was excited to turn in my project, but when I turned it in, my teacher immediately said, you failed this assignment. She told me, *you should have known that I would catch you cheating*. I replied that I didn't cheat, and she said, *yes, you did*. And she was like go sit down. So, I sat down, and I was in shock. I worked hard on this assignment to be shot down by the teacher.

Gilbert recalled having a lot of "social anxiety" in high school. He also divulged how his parents taught him not to speak back to teachers and that the teacher was always correct. Gilbert was disappointed that the teacher did not verify his work and check it was plagiarism. He questioned why the teacher did not review his work or why she assumed it was plagiarism. Gilbert shared this situation with his parents and explained that "I had to speak with my parents about what happened with the teacher and my assignment." Gilbert's father scheduled a meeting with the teacher and continued to say "Both my parents met with the teacher because they watched me do all the work."

Gilbert also elaborated on how he felt belittled by another teacher in high school. One teacher would announce to the entire class if Gilbert received a low grade on a quiz. Gilbert felt dissuaded from showing up to this class and lost motivation to do work in this class. He went on to say:

He would say in front of the class, *You didn't study, and this is why you made the lowest grade in the class*. The same teacher would also stop me at the classroom

door as the school bell rang and tell me I was late. He would see me in walking in the classroom as the bell rang, and he would send me back to get a tardy pass. I was not allowed to enter the classroom.

As Gilbert voiced these experiences, he displayed sadness and was dismayed. Disclosing these memories was not easy for Gilbert. Nevertheless, Gilbert shared these challenges he experienced in school with his parents. Gilbert described that addressing the school about the situation was difficult for his mother. Since his mother is a school teacher in the same school district, it was oppugning to address the issue with this teacher. Gilbert elaborated:

My mother is also a teacher, and a weird bureaucracy system goes on in a predominantly White school district with teachers and the School Board. This teacher knows a lot of people, which is why he hasn't lost his job yet. I'm not the first student he has done this because this has happened to many other students that are like me. Many people know that he is this way. And so, I felt there wasn't anything we could do.

Gilbert felt that his treatment with the high school teacher was not an isolated situation. He never witnessed the teacher treat other students in this manner but always heard of students that were also treated differently by the same teacher. He further explained, "I didn't see him do this with other people, but I heard about it from other students about how he would be mean to other girls and other students."

Furthermore, Gilbert detailed how many other Latinx students in Gilbert's high school called him "whitewashed." "The Hispanic students at my school would never get along with me because my first language is English, and I was in honor classes. I didn't

have good social interactions with people from my culture in high school.” Gilbert emphasized this was a “Nerve-wracking experience not to be accepted by your own culture and be called whitewashed.”

Overall, high school was challenging, and Gilbert did not have a good experience. He articulated, “I did not feel as though I belonged in high school.” He shared that his parents were worried about him failing classes while in high school and he expressed, “My parents saw a pattern of me not caring because I didn’t enjoy being in that learning environment.” High School was difficult for Gilbert, and his anguish of not belonging was setting him up for failure. Gilbert desired a “way out.” At the time, he remembered the CAMP program at UNG and was interested in applying.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Gilbert attended school and worked part-time at a vineyard picking grapes. He described how he started work at 4:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. and finished at 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. He remembered how he felt during this time and how he “was not enjoying life.” In his last year of high school, Gilbert met with the CAMP recruiter. Gilbert recalled his initial meeting with the CAMP recruiter and explained he was not interested in applying for the CAMP program even though he was eligible.

Finally, Gilbert contacted the CAMP recruiter to discuss the prospects of applying and attending UNG. The second time he met with the CAMP recruiter, he decided to try and apply for the program. He told, “I realized it was such a good opportunity that he couldn’t let it go.” He expounded how the CAMP recruiter assisted him with his application process to college. The CAMP recruiter “was a big part of my life,” and he continued to say:

When the CAMP recruiter first visited my high school to discuss CAMP, I felt I did not fit into the program. Although, I worked after school in agriculture on the field. Then the CAMP recruiter came to my high school again a few months before graduation. I remembered the CAMP recruiter and knew about the CAMP program but forgot about it.

Gilbert always knew he wanted to attend college and pursue a major in the medical field. He was motivated to pursue an undergraduate degree and worked with the CAMP recruiter to start the application process. He explained that:

I met with the CAMP recruiter twice in person, but she was always available through text message, we would text, and from there, I worked as fast as I could to give her my essays and finish the CAMP application process.

Further, Gilbert elaborated how he felt he did not fit in high school, and the opportunity of attending college motivated him to do well in classes. “It means a lot” to Gilbert and his parents that he decided to attend college. He had depicted the many challenges in high school and going to college was a positive change. His parents were proud that he chose to pursue a college education:

My dad and mom told me several times you’ll be lucky if you pass your classes. Then they saw that I was finally taking the initiative and going to my classes and getting A’s. I was making sure I passed my classes. They were proud of me.

Gilbert emphasized that “It was good to get motivated and out of the house because I started to blossom, which made my life a little bit better.” Gilbert explained his parents are happy with his educational achievements.



## **CAMP Orientation**

Gilbert recounted CAMP orientation and how he felt excited about the prospects of a new beginning. He remembered the CAMP orientation lasted two to three days and how they had a lot of activities to interact with the CAMP cohort:

When I was getting ready to attend orientation for the CAMP program, I was super excited. I attended the CAMP orientation, and I talked to everyone.

Orientation was extensive; they had icebreaker activities on the first day, a lot of games on the following day, and a whole bunch of information like statistics.

Then the CAMP staff discussed why you're here and what it means to be a part of the CAMP program.

Gilbert met other students with the same high school experiences in the orientation. The CAMP staff also discussed "barriers and breaking down barriers." For the first time, Gilbert felt a sense of belonging. He went on to say:

We got to know each other. There were many icebreakers like the human knot team-building challenge. We all grabbed each other's hands and we got crisscrossed and got jumbled up. We tried and tried to unknot ourselves. I had a lot of fun at my CAMP orientation.

The CAMP Orientation was enlightening for Gilbert. The icebreakers during orientation allowed him to build relationships with other students and learn about CAMP and UNG. UNG connected Gilbert to other students that had similar backgrounds. He expressed his content as a UNG student and felt a sense of belonging. This was his realization of his identity.

## **COVID-19 Pandemic and Time Management**

Gilbert started the CAMP program in the fall of 2019 and received his Associate degree in Spring 2022. He recounted how it took him longer to complete his associate degree due to the COVID-19 pandemic. His goal was to take classes and pursue his bachelor's degree in Fall 2022. Nonetheless, Gilbert bared his feelings about how the COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult period for him. He became depressed during this time. Gilbert explained how quarantining was very difficult emotionally and academically and he revealed, "I had to request a hardship withdrawal because I failed every class." Gilbert described how the CAMP staff provided support and assistance to continue his studies. With their encouragement, he returned the following Fall semester.

In addition to the COVID-19 challenges Gilbert experienced during his first year of college, he detailed that time management was challenging. However, Gilbert posited that the CAMP program gave Gilbert strategies and solutions to organize his calendar and maximize his studies and assignments. CAMP assisted him with organizing his time and prioritizing academic commitments and activities.

## **Motivation to Pursue a College Degree**

Gilbert believes working in the fields taught him about hard work. He expressed, "I feel you work harder when you work in the fields," and he carry on by saying:

Having worked in the fields, I consistently have to ensure I worked hard to earn money. I had to get dirty and work extra hard for money. If I had a certain amount in my bank account during the month, I tried to stretch it out as much as possible. I'm taking full-time classes, working, and doing all these other things to ensure I have a home. So, these things give me an edge to be a migrant student.

Additionally, Gilbert's motivation for a college degree was to "provide for his family and his future family." He wants to have a large family as his father does. He said his father has a large family, and he "loves the idea of having a big family." He further said that "I know to have a big family and be a good parent, I have to support them and give them a good education, so I want an education." Lastly, CAMP provided Gilbert with the inspiration and motivation to stay enrolled in college. With the support of CAMP, he learned how to cope with depression when things were challenging and manage his time.

### **Combating Microaggressions in a Higher Education**

There were certain situations in which Gilbert had some challenges within the university. He explained how he frequently would go to the gym on campus with his friend to work out but going to the campus gym to work out was an uncomfortable experience:

I felt this employee at the gym was watching us because we might steal the equipment. He gave us the nastiest looks while trying to work out. I had the feeling he was trying to make us uncomfortable to stop going to the gym. I don't know how to describe what was going on, but it was very strange.

Gilbert recalled another occasion when he was involved in the "I Stand With Immigrants Day" event on campus. He disclosed how an individual in charge of the campus cafeteria aggressively approached the migrant students asking about the event:

We were handing out t-shirts and Mexican chocolates called "de Abuelita." We thought we had taken the correct route to plan the event. Apparently, we did something wrong, and the man who ran the cafeteria came up and started yelling

at us, *Who threw this event? Who's responsible for all this?* The man went on to say that no one did not notify him of the event. I felt it was unprofessional of him to yell at us and comes toward us so aggressively. We were excited to celebrate our event, and it felt like it had to do with our race. If we did something wrong, he could handle the situation 100 percent differently than coming at us with pure aggression.

Gilbert further explained CAMP provided him with coping strategies and skills to handle these situations. Additionally, he wanted to use his learned skills and advocate for migrant people:

I was still new to college when the first incident happened at the gym. I was getting the hang of things. Now that I'm a member of migrant organizations and a fraternity, I am more aware. I want to advocate for migrant people and want to make a stand. I decided to tell the CAMP Director how I felt about this incident.

He did not share the first incident at the campus gym. He stated, "I didn't want to come here to cause trouble, and I didn't want to ruin this opportunity. So my friend and I kept it to ourselves." Yet, when he experienced the second incident in the campus cafeteria, Gilbert felt he could confide in the CAMP Director:

I shared with the CAMP Director how the man in the cafeteria spoke down to us and told him how I felt. This was the first time I had spoken about anything that happened on campus. I don't know why... but I felt I could talk about it with the CAMP Director.

Gilbert found his voice and spoke up about the incident. He learned how to handle and work through his emotions and seek the guidance of the CAMP staff.

## **Home Away from Home and a Community**

Gilbert expressed, “I really enjoy school.” He had a positive academic and social experience, coursework, and interaction with faculty and staff. He conveyed he was comfortable interacting with the CAMP staff members and felt CAMP gave him a “home away from home,” and he continued saying:

When I first got here, the CAMP staff was so welcoming. I literally would pass by their office every day and talk with them. The CAMP staff was like my people. I spent a lot of time in the Counselor’s office and Director’s offices and talked to them. They told me about an internship opportunity to work with the Director of CAMP. So, that was really fun.

The environment of the family that Gilbert experienced with CAMP made him feel he belonged. While in high school, he did not feel a sense of fitting in. He immediately discovered that he fitted in with CAMP and other migrant students. Gilbert articulated how the CAMP staff and CAMP Director, his close friend, joining a fraternity, and his fraternity’s advisor is his college support system. He elaborated that “They all make my college experience successful.” Gilbert also described how participating in the CAMP program during the first year of college significantly impacted his undergraduate education.

Lastly, Gilbert characterized his experience at UNG as positive. He got involved in new activities, found new interests, and enjoyed studying with other students.

Organizations Gilbert has joined and was involved with outside of the CAMP

programs are Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc., and the Latino Students Association. He also supported the Peer Health Educators activities on campus. Occasionally Gilbert attended church services near campus.

Gilbert was actively involved in campus organizations and was committed to advocating for migrant awareness. Engaging in other college activities provided him with making initiatives and developing his leadership skills.

### **Reflections**

Finally, Gilbert noted that every student could benefit from the CAMP program, regardless of background. He emphasized how the CAMP program was beneficial to every student. As a recipient of the CAMP program, Gilbert experienced the significance of the program's academic and financial support. CAMP ensured his retention and college success. When reflecting on his undergraduate experience, Gilbert articulated how he wanted a change, and attending UNG allowed him to reinvent himself. He expressed how his participation in the CAMP program was one of my most exciting experiences. Gilbert learned how to cope with the pandemic and continued with his classes. He also developed his leadership skills and the skills to communicate and confide in the CAMP staff for guidance and assistance. Overall, CAMP gave Gilbert "a home away from home and a community of belonging."

### **Griselda: "They Gave Me a Voice, and They Listened"**

#### **Profile and History**

Griselda, her parents, brother, and two sisters were born in El Salvador. They all came to the U.S. in 2014. She revealed, "Once my father obtained legal status for himself and our family, we moved to the U.S." She lived in Gainesville, Georgia, with

her parents, her daughter, who was five, her one sister, and her deceased sister's son. She also has a brother that no longer lived with them. Griselda disclosed how she lived with her mother in El Salvador while her father lived in the U.S. illegally to work:

My mother did not want to move to this country when we were young. She wanted us to come to the U.S. legally. After many years, my father finally received his green card, and the family received legal status to move to the U.S.

Upon Griselda's father receipt of his legal status to live in the U.S., he petitioned for his family's legal documentation. Griselda explained that they were older during this process and felt that the family would have a better opportunity living in the U.S. Both Griselda's parents had a limited education. Her mother went to school until the second grade, and her father never attended school. Griselda's parents worked in the poultry plant in Gainesville, Georgia. Griselda also worked in the poultry plant but quit to pursue her college degree. She was the first member of her family to attend college. Griselda mentioned that her brother finished high school in the U.S. but did not pursue higher education and works as a truck driver.

### **Secondary Education Challenges and Language Barriers**

Griselda explained that she was sixteen when she arrived in the U.S. and did not know how to speak English. Despite not knowing English, her parents enrolled her in Johnson High School to complete her high school diploma. Griselda described attending Johnson High School as a "hard" experience. She divulged that the high school did not evaluate her English skills and was unaware of her lack of English. She further expounded how other "Hispanic" students teased her English accent. Griselda told how

the school administrators put her in a class where she did not understand what the teacher was saying:

When I started attending school, they gave me my class schedule and room assignments and put me in these classrooms. I had a course outline for each class that told me what I had to learn and study to pass. I was confused and it was hard.

Due to the lack of speaking English, Griselda decided to withdraw from school.

She enrolled in a technical school in Gainesville, Georgia, to learn and accelerate her English skills. She asserted that she had to pay tuition to attend school and learn English. She delineated, “I feel attending the technical school for one year helped me learn and advance in my English.” Although Griselda did not receive a high school diploma, she attained a certificate for completing the technical school’s English as a second language course.

### **Family Communication**

Griselda did not tell anyone about the challenges of not knowing English, understanding the teachers and lessons, or the teasing from peers. She recollected a harrowing time when her sister was ill, and her mother devoted her time to nursing her sister. She mentioned:

During the first two years that we came to this country, my mom took care of my sister, who was very sick. It was a very difficult and sad time for us. My mom was constantly in the hospital with my sister or at home taking care of her. When my sister died, my mother left for El Salvador and stayed there for a long time. We had to live with our aunt. So, I had no one to talk to about my feelings and problems.



As Griselda deeply lamented over the passing of her sister, she expressed she did not want to burden her family with her problems. Griselda elaborated on how her mother raised her in El Salvador while her father lived and worked in the U.S. She does not have a close relationship with her father. She would see him when he traveled to El Salvador to visit. She shared that her relationship with her father was not the same as that with her mother. “It was not until I moved to the U.S. that I got to live with him and get to know him.” Consequently, she did not share her personal and educational concerns with her family. The support from her family was limited.

### **Secondary Education Support and the High School Equivalency Diploma**

Griselda remembered some teachers were helpful but reminisced about how one classmate was always willing to help her while attending high school. Griselda recalled how she and the classmate became friends:

In my high school, other students were also learning English. I became friends with one student who was from Honduras. He arrived in this country in middle school and knew a little more English than I did. He tried to help me with my English. He was always there for me when I needed to understand something in school.

Griselda mentioned some teachers that cared about her education and wanted to help her. Yet, due to the language barrier, they could not understand her. She also did not know how to communicate effectively with her teachers because she did not understand English. Griselda expressed frustration with her language barrier and could not speak with these teachers.

At this point, Griselda was not attending school, and she decided to work in the poultry plant to help her parents financially. She stated she had worked there for six years and decided she wanted to receive her General Educational Development (GED). She communicated that she learned about a GED program offered at UNG called the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) that helps migrants earn their GED. Through the HEP program, she received her high school equivalency diploma.

### **College and Family Obligations**

Since Griselda was no longer attending high school, she was responsible for driving her parents to work. She explained that her parents were not able to drive at that time. Griselda also shared that she taught her mother how to drive and she told, “Now, my mother knows how to drive and goes to work and the grocery store.”

Helping her family gave Griselda a sense of pride. She prioritized her duty to support family members and translate for her parents with financial matters. During this period of her education, it was feasible for Griselda to balance work and her parents’ expectations to support the family. She continued to explain:

My brother learned English but doesn’t live with us and cannot help my parents. I also helped my mother buy a car to drive and depend on herself. Now that she is driving, I do not have to take them to work or take them to the dentists or doctors.

While attending the HEP program, she learned about CAMP and its opportunities for migrant students to attend college. She realized the possibility of attaining an undergraduate degree was possible. She recollected how she approached her family about her goal to attend college and how she needed their support:

One day I told my parents that I was enrolling at UNG and going to get my college degree. I let them know that I had learned about the CAMP program through HEP. I explained how CAMP paid for my first year of college and that now was my chance to get a college education. I also told my mother that I needed her support when I started college.

Setting boundaries with her parents was essential for Griselda to pursue her undergraduate education. Griselda explained how she told her mother that she could no longer provide transportation to her father and her nephew. She described that she took a stance with her mother to take on the responsibility of taking her father to work and her nephew to all medical appointments.

Although it “means a lot” for Griselda to be the first member of her family to pursue a college degree, she characterized her college experience as “hard.” She elaborated that “When it comes to my education, I do not have any support from my family because they don’t understand what I am going through...I am doing it on my own, and it can be difficult.” She explained that:

It means a lot to me to be achieving my goals. I want to receive my Bachelor’s degree in computer science, but the courses have been difficult. The classes are hard and not having a lot of support from my family is even harder. I can say my mom is happy that I am in college. My dad helps me when he can, but I do not have a close connection with my dad.

Griselda concluded that “My father is happy for me even if he does not know what I am doing in school.”

### **Affordability and Accessibility**

Griselda stated how working in a poultry plant for six years was “grueling,” and a college education would give her family better opportunities and quality of life. She emphasized that “UNG was my best choice because of the location.” She stated the tuition was affordable at UNG compared to other universities. As the eldest sibling, Griselda is responsible for assisting her parents, and moving away from home was not an option financially:

It is not an option for me to live on my own. I cannot move and attend another university because I help my parents and I need to live with them. I live close to the UNG campus, which is a five to ten-minute drive from my house.

Griselda told that if she attended a different university, she would have to rent an apartment, which could be expensive, and living with her parents would help with that expense of rent. She also would not have the academic and financial support of CAMP.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Griselda highlighted how the HEP program was instrumental in recommending her to apply to the CAMP program. CAMP gave Griselda an awareness of FAFSA and financial assistance she did not know was possible to obtain. She conveyed, “I didn’t even know what financial aid was, how to apply for financial aid or anything about financial assistance to help with college.” CAMP also provided information on classes she had to register for in her first year of college:

When I graduated from HEP, they recommended I apply to the CAMP program. I jumped from one side to the other. I went directly from HEP into the CAMP program. CAMP is a very good program for people like me who do not have

family support because they do not know about college. CAMP gives you all the information you need for college. The CAMP staff gave me everything I needed to know to get started. They told me when to register for classes and which classes I needed. The information CAMP gave me was very helpful because I didn't know or have any idea about financial aid.

Griselda had planned to work and save money to go to college. She thought people worked and saved money to pay for college and did not know about financial aid. CAMP informed Griselda she was eligible for financial assistance and helped her with the FAFSA application. CAMP also told her of the additional financial support they provided during her first year of college. The financial aid and support received from CAMP were very helpful in alleviating the financial burden during her first year of college.

In fall 2021, Griselda enrolled in the CAMP program. She recalled how she felt the difference in the students' ages in the CAMP program. Griselda specified she was one of the older students in her CAMP cohort. She expressed how she did not know much about the CAMP program and she did not know what to expect. She expressed, "It was like going to a different country, and you didn't do your research on that country," and expressed:

I was nervous on the first day of CAMP because I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know anything about CAMP or college. The CAMP people talked about many things they do to help us with college. I was initially nervous because most of the students attending the CAMP orientation were 18 or 19 years old, and I am 25. I felt the age difference and felt weird.

The age difference between Griselda and the CAMP cohort ostensibly no longer made a difference. Griselda overcame her nervousness about being the older student in the program and focused on her goal of attaining a college degree.

### **Postsecondary Education Challenges**

Griselda conveyed how she put pressure on herself to understand the course material during her first semester in college. However, she never considered withdrawing. She revealed, “I feel that I had a lot of pressure, and I put a lot of pressure on myself to understand my math class,” and went on to say:

College is hard. I know that for a fact. At the beginning of my first semester at UNG, I wasn't doing well in my math class. I didn't understand it. I was putting pressure on myself and blocking myself from learning things. Since it was my first experience in college, I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know whether this was the right thing I was doing or not. After realizing I didn't need to put so much pressure on myself because I was blocking myself from learning, I reviewed my assignments again. Then the math class was not so difficult, and I could understand. I know what to expect now.

When discussing Griselda's interaction with faculty and staff, she described her experience as “pretty good.” She remarked that she does not talk much with people, including relatives, but her experience at UNG has been positive overall. She elaborated on one negative interaction with a staff member in the Tutoring Services Center. She expressed, “I had one bad experience in the Tutoring Services Center, but I stayed focused on my goal to obtain a tutor for my math class,” and said:

I only experienced one negative interaction when I went to the Tutoring Services Center to request help with my math assignment. I told the lady working at the Tutoring Services Center that I needed a tutor with math. The lady was rude toward me. At first, I was upset because of the way she spoke to me, but then I realized she was not behaving this way just with me. I noticed she was also rude to other students.

Griselda recognized that her priority was to get the help she needed for her math class. She did not want the incident to affect her purpose of getting the help she sought. In this scenario, she focused on her goal and dismissed the individual's display of rudeness.

Griselda elaborated that "One of the biggest challenges about attending college is that I didn't know college was different from high school." She found college to be different, and immediately learned that she had to be responsible for learning the coursework. She expressed, "I was surprised by how different college is from high school," and continued to saying:

In college, the professors don't care if you go to class or if you're watching movies on your phone. It is the student's responsibility to do their coursework, study, and do everything alone. The professor will not ask you why you haven't done your assignments. That's something that I didn't know at the beginning of college, but I caught on very quickly.

Griselda learned quickly to be responsible for completing her coursework. "In college, it was the student's responsibility if they want to learn or not; it's their choice." She explained how she paid attention in class and listened to the professor's lectures.

CAMP also provided Griselda with academic support and guidance to succeed in her first semester in college.

### **Benefits Being a Migrant Student**

Griselda describes CAMP as “pretty good people.” She conveyed, “HEP and CAMP staff help me with everything that I ask.” As a migrant college student, Griselda had a positive academic experience. Particularly with the CAMP program. She shared, “Whenever I need something, CAMP has helped me,” and went on to say:

Being a migrant college student is a positive influence on me. Even when I was in the CAMP class and had questions or requested help with a different class, the instructor helped me. CAMP always helped me. The CAMP staff would give me tips and advice on how to do things or say, do it this way because it would be better. So, it is good to go to the CAMP staff and get help on anything and everything.

Griselda credited the CAMP staff for having a “positive” impact on her first semester in college. “CAMP assisted me with any questions, especially my first semester when I didn’t know anything about college or UNG.” Through the CAMP program, Griselda was able to work as a work-study for the HEP program. Specifically, she voiced that the CAMP retention coordinator was the most helpful of her succeeding in completing the first semester in college. She explained that the CAMP retention coordinator taught an orientation class for the CAMP students. The course taught time management, registration, and application deadlines and provided information on the available campus resources:



I took a class my first semester in college that was mandatory for all CAMP students. Every Tuesday and Thursday, the CAMP retention coordinator would teach us what to do if we needed help or who to go to for help. For example, we learned that if we needed help writing an essay, we would go to a writing center. She guided us on where to go if we had issues or needed help with classwork. We discussed topics about time management and scholarship opportunities, and deadlines.

The CAMP services aided Griselda with the resources necessary to succeed in her first semester at UNG. CAMP made her aware of the registration dates and FAFSA deadlines. Also, the CAMP staff encouraged her to submit her FAFSA application early.

### **Motivation to Pursue a College Degree**

The motivation for Griselda to continue her college degree is “education.” She expounded that “I want an education, and that’s the only thing I want for myself.” She also elaborated that “I am the person who has helped me the most and pushed myself to one day get a better job.” She knew what her “purpose” was to attend UNG. Further she explained, “Things that may be challenging; I don’t take it personally because I know my purpose for attending college,” and continued to saying:

I am an adult, and I know what I want. I understand why I am going to UNG and clearly understand what I want to do with my education. My education will allow me to get work somewhere better than my parents. I am not like the other students who feel that doing schoolwork can be inconvenient.

Griselda does not feel the inconvenience of prioritizing studying instead of having

social plans. She knew her purpose was “To go to college and get an education.” Due to family obligations and work, Griselda indicated she does not have time to participate in college-sponsored events or student clubs and organizations. She juggled school, work, and family, which prevented her from participating in other activities.

Although CAMP encouraged students to get involved with student clubs and organizations, Griselda could not participate in other activities. During the day, she attended classes, found time to study, and worked in the HEP office. Griselda’s obligations were different of a traditional college student. She also shared that she takes care of her family in the evenings. She hoped she could be part of a student club or organization in the future.

CAMP also required Griselda to meet with her professors after her midterms. Griselda emphasized meeting with professors was a great benefit in establishing a relationship with them and letting them know she needed assistance with course work:

CAMP required us to meet with the professors after our midterms. When I asked the professor if I could meet with him, I informed him that I was a CAMP student and that the CAMP program required I meet with my professors after my midterm, which is why I am in his office. He didn’t know about CAMP, and I told him.

In this circumstance, her professor was unaware of CAMP and its requirement. She explained, “This was a rare situation because the professor did not know much about CAMP or that I was a migrant.” However, after she clarified that she was required to meet with her class professor to discuss the midterms, she received assistance and guidance.

## **Reflections**

When reflecting what type of student could benefit and thrive from the CAMP program, Griselda articulated that “It all depends on the students and if they want to take advantage of the opportunity.” She verbalized, “It did not matter what program is available to help students with college, and it was the student’s choice to take the opportunity,” and expressed that:

It’s been positive to learn at UNG. I have learned many things here. CAMP provides many benefits to students. The CAMP program can give us everything, but if a student doesn’t want to do the work, there is no point in being part of the program. Personally, someone from CAMP would always listen. They gave me a voice and they listened.

Griselda’s inspiration for pursuing an undergraduate degree was her daughter and nephew. As the eldest female sibling, she wanted to continue to assist her parents and family and provide for them. CAMP was a good option for a first-generation student like Griselda, who wanted to continue her education. CAMP gave Griselda an outlet to talk about her personal and educational challenges in her journey as a college student.

**Jeff: “I’m Proud to be a Migrant Student Because it is Not Easy”**

## **Profile and History**

Jeff was the oldest of four siblings and lived with both parents. He was born in Gainesville, Georgia, and moved to Chicago, Illinois, where he attended elementary school and one year of high school. His parents were born and raised in Mexico. Jeff’s parents worked in agriculture, recalling how they moved many times when he was a young child. He elaborated that “My parents moved from state to state when I was

young, looking for work until they settled for nine years in Chicago.” While living in Chicago, Jeff learned there was a “migrant program” that documented him as a migrant student. He explained the program was for students of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and he expressed, “Being in this program is the one big thing that helped me qualify for CAMP.”

When describing Jeff’s community in Chicago, he stressed it was “not safe.” He detailed that he lived in predominately BIPOC and Latinx communities. The majority of his classmates and teachers were also of minority backgrounds. He described, “I considered myself a minority, and I went to school with people of the same background and was with them every day.” Jeff recalled that he and his classmates had parents with little to no education.

### **Relocating to Georgia**

During the middle of Jeff’s first year of high school in Chicago, Illinois, his family moved back to Gainesville, Georgia. He expressed that his high school experience with both high schools was positive:

My high school experience was pretty good. I had the opportunity to attend a charter high school in Chicago. Chicago does have a wide variety of schools, and I went to a charter school. The way the charter school works for enrollment is like a lottery system. You pretty much applied, and you had a chance of getting accepted or not. And so I was admitted to the charter school. It was a pretty rigorous school with high standards. But I only attended for half the year because my family moved to Gainesville, Georgia, in 2016.

Jeff remembered how it felt halfway through his first year when he transferred to

a high school in Georgia. He conveyed, “Attending high school in Georgia was pretty good...even though it was predominantly White, I think that I had a pretty good experience in terms of academics.” In addition, he expounded that “My high school education was also pretty rigorous, as well.” He expressed how he immediately discovered that “White students identify themselves differently and associate themselves with groups that have similarities.”

As Jeff reminisced on his high school experience in Georgia, he emphasized how he was proud to serve as the news anchor for his school. Although Jeff transitioned to a predominantly White high school, he did not experience microaggressions or challenges with his peers or high school personnel. Overall, he had a positive and enriching high school education experience.

### **Secondary Education Support**

Jeff credited his high school counselor for his support in enrolling in the Dual Enrollment program and for connecting him to the CAMP recruiter. His guidance counselor contacted the CAMP recruiter to meet Jeff and provide him with the opportunity to apply to the program:

My guidance counselor was the one that reached out to CAMP about me. Of course, CAMP has a recruiter, but the recruiter had not been to our school yet and had not reached us. It may be because we are in a rural community, but that is why my guidance counselor contacted the CAMP recruiter.

Due to the initiative of his guidance counselor to contact the CAMP recruiter, Jeff was able to apply to the CAMP program. Jeff felt his guidance counselor was “a great help” in directing him on the right path toward college.

## **The Pursuit of Higher Education**

Jeff realized he wanted to pursue college during his seventh-grade field trip to a college campus. He revealed, “I decided to go to college in seventh grade.” Touring the college campus, he realized the difference between the educational environments. Jeff divulged how this field trip was pivotal in his decision to attain an undergraduate degree. He expressed, “I saw the gravity behind going to college,” and mentioned:

When I was in seventh grade, living in Chicago, I attended a charter school. The charter school took us on a field trip to tour the University of Iowa. You know, the state of Iowa is right next to the state of Illinois. They are right next to each other. We toured the university, and I saw the difference between public schools and higher education.

During this field trip to the university, Jeff realized the value of his education and how essential it was to prepare for higher education. He elaborated that “I realized people always advocate for higher education but never advocate for the education you need to make you eligible for college.” Touring the campus and getting a sense of being a prospective college student was an excellent experience for Jeff. At this point, Jeff knew he wanted to pursue a higher education degree but did not know which college he wanted to attend.

Tuition was a significant factor in Jeff’s decision to apply for UNG. Jeff portrayed his first impression when he toured the UNG Gainesville campus for the first time. He went on to say the campus was “boring and dull,” and continued saying:

My junior year in high school, I was now closer towards graduation and started looking at colleges. It was my senior year when I toured the UNG Gainesville

campus. I compared the UNG Gainesville campus to the University of Iowa, and I thought to myself how the UNG Gainesville campus was kind of dull and appeared boring...but the tuition was cheaper.

Tuition was a significant factor in Jeff's decision to apply to UNG. Although he would have preferred to attend a larger university out of state, staying in Georgia and attending UNG was the most feasible. Regardless of the university's size, he stated he would still receive the same undergraduate degree.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Upon meeting with the CAMP recruiter and learning about the financial support CAMP provided, Jeff said he didn't "believe it." He expressed, "It was like one of those things where I didn't believe it because it was just too good to be true," and said:

When my high school guidance counselor reached out to CAMP to tell them I was interested, the CAMP recruiter met with me, and we got things rolling. She told me about the program and encouraged me to apply for CAMP. The CAMP recruiter also told me how CAMP could assist me throughout my first year of college. At that time, I already had an idea that I would have to pay for college myself and knew college was not cheap. So, when the CAMP recruiter continued to explain how CAMP can help you pay for college, it caught my attention.

Jeff communicated that the CAMP recruiter provided helpful information on how the program supports its students academically and financially during the first year of college. In addition, to the financial support CAMP offered, Jeff found the support to pay for housing and live on campus during the first year of college appealing. He voiced the prospect of living on campus convinced him to apply for CAMP.

## **CAMP Orientation**

Jeff started CAMP in 2020 and was in his third year. Jeff recollected the CAMP orientation and how he felt attending college differed from high school. He elaborated, “I was comparing it to high school at the time and quickly realized how different it would be.” Jeff instantly felt that his new undergraduate journey was an accomplishment. He expressed that he had an “astonishing” feeling when he started attending UNG:

The CAMP orientation was at a different location and different environment. In high school it’s a less nerve-wracking environment. They hold your hand, walk you through things, and I felt familiar. Going to college is a way different experience. UNG has a more diverse population in terms of demographics, like age group and the type of race people are. You see that you are surrounded by others, like adults, and you put yourself in their shoes. I felt like, wow, I’m doing something this big.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person CAMP orientation transitioned to online. However, Jeff told how he met his cohort during the CAMP orientation, and the information he received during the orientation was helpful in his college education endeavors:

Our first CAMP orientation meeting was in person. I met other students, and we got to know each other, and that’s good, but as the pandemic progressed, we had to transition online. But when we started to meet in person again, it hit me that I was in college.

The CAMP orientation helped Jeff comprehend how he was taking significant



steps for himself and his family. At this point, he acknowledged that being in the college environment and pursuing a degree was monumental in changing the trajectory of his life. Jeff voiced he had never thought of withdrawing from college. He voiced, “I realized that obtaining a higher education degree would be the way to break the cycle.” He recognizes his purpose in receiving a higher education degree and how essential it was to end his parents’ financial struggles.

### **Cohort Meetings**

The cohort meetings were very instrumental for Jeff in understanding his purpose in pursuing his college education. He brought to attention the value of these meetings and how he never thought of dropping out. Jeff told, “I never had those thoughts of dropping out of college,” and he continued saying:

During the cohort meetings, the CAMP staff shared program announcements, and they also have these workshops to help you with college. I remember one CAMP cohort meeting, the staff taught us that we should find out why we are in college. Thinking of why I am in college stuck with me. The first reason is that I want a degree for myself, but I also know my parents’ struggles. I hear stories of how they struggled back in their home country, lived in poverty, and how good I have it in this country. They like physically walked from the Mexico border to the U.S. border. So that’s what I think about whenever I have those thoughts about school.

While attending a cohort meeting, Jeff recognized he needed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the CAMP program and “take advantage of his parents’ sacrifices to be in the U.S.” He could not pass up the opportunities CAMP offered. He expressed, “My parents have worked so hard for me to be where I am right now.” Jeff

knew his choices were monumental, and he shared, “My choices affect not only me but those that came before me.”

### **Interactions with Faculty**

Jeff summarized his experiences at UNG with his academics and coursework were “pretty good.” He also characterized his relationships with faculty and staff as “straightforward,” and continued saying:

The workload is the same as any other college student. My workload and my academics have been pretty good. I have been getting good grades in my classes. My interaction with faculty and staff at UNG has been straightforward. The same way as other students receive treatment, with no difference.

Although Jeff had positive experiences with faculty and staff, he mentioned that he heard of other students that had a negative experience, “specifically targeting their race.” However, he conveyed how he respects everyone he interacts with and generally has a good experience with faculty and staff.

### **Motivation to Pursue a College Degree**

The motivation for Jeff to pursue his college degree is his “education and academic performance.” He elaborated that “Well, what really motivated me was that I’ve seen the results of a college education.” His education has been beneficial in receiving scholarships:

I’ve known the efforts I put into my college education will get me results.

Through scholarships, I can still continue my education and live on my own.

Because of my academics having good grades, I am getting scholarships. My

parents also tell me to try my best. Yeah. They are like a really big support system for me.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Being a Migrant Student**

Jeff resonated that even after completing the CAMP program, the staff still provided him with assistance and resources. Jeff learned about the scholarship opportunities through CAMP:

I am a recipient of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME Becas), a scholarship from the Government of Mexico. One of the requirements for this scholarship is you have to be Mexican-born or of Mexican descent attending an undergraduate program. CAMP emailed me about this scholarship opportunity, and I thought I should try this out. At first, I had this mentality that so many people would apply, and I will not get it. Then I got an email telling me that I was a semifinalist, and I was like, oh, wow. Now I am an IME Becas scholar.

With the support of CAMP, Jeff received a scholarship to assist with his tuition. He remembered how excited he felt after receiving the email announcing he had received the scholarship. He was proud to receive the scholarship and grateful for CAMP's support in pursuing the opportunity.

Jeff revealed that being a migrant student has influenced his educational journey. He expounded, "I don't think I would have the same opportunities and experiences I do now." As a migrant student enrolled in the CAMP program, Jeff communicated he had financial and academic support:

Being a migrant student has influenced my education because with the support of CAMP, I could go to school and not pay out of pocket. My parents did not have

to pay anything, and I could also move out and live on my own. Yeah, being a migrant student has really influenced and changed my outlook on my education.

In addition, Jeff delineated he did not experience any difficulties with his college Endeavors, and expressed, “No. I didn’t have any trouble with anybody.” He went on to say that being a migrant student had a lot of “weight.” He mentioned, “When I think of the term migrant student, a first-generation American college student, I know it has a lot of weight.”

Ultimately, Jeff felt that being a migrant student gave him “perseverance” to continue his undergraduate studies. Jeff accentuated the guidance and mentorship CAMP provided was critical “Because it’s hard enough to attend college.” He stated that in college, “You are on your own, and if you fail, that was on you for failing.” He continued to elaborate that “With CAMP’s support, there was no reason to fall behind in your academics and a CAMP student can always get back up with the right help and direction from CAMP.”

### **CAMP Support**

Jeff described, “My college experience has been very successful because of CAMP and the mentorship they’ve given me.” Jeff recognized how essential CAMP support was to his educational success. He highlighted how the CAMP peer mentors, Director, and counselor were helpful in his undergraduate journey:

Another service that CAMP provides is a peer mentor. So, a peer mentor is usually a second, third, or fourth-year college student. Even if they are a college student, they already have the experience and knowledge or may have the answers

to your questions. I had a peer mentor who also helped me a lot. CAMP staff helped me a lot also.

The scholarship and financial support CAMP provided during the first year of college allowed Jeff the opportunity to attend UNG. Jeff explained how his parents were not familiar with the process of higher education. They do not know about FAFSA, and he could not request their assistance on how to apply for FAFSA or how to complete sections of the application.

Jeff also explained how he lived alone in his first year at UNG and needed additional financial assistance. He contacted the CAMP Director and told him of his financial circumstances. CAMP provided the financial relief to assist him during this challenging situation. Jeff expressed how he was “grateful” CAMP had the resources to assist him during his first year of college.

CAMP’s impact on Jeff’s first year of college was overall positive. He explained, “Being a CAMP student had a very good and positive impact on my first-year college.” He elucidated that his experience was good compared to other college students at UNG. As a CAMP student, he instantly made friends, which benefited him:

CAMP was good and positive because I compared it to other students’ experiences here. I talked to students who were not CAMP recipients and asked about their college experience. They give me negative feedback on their experience and tell me they come to school, go to class, and then go home. I ask them if they enjoy going to college, and they say no because it is all stress and there is no time for fun and whatnot.

Jeff emphasized how starting the CAMP program with a cohort of migrant

students was a positive experience and a great start to his college career. Having a group of friends also motivated him to participate in other campus activities. Jeff has not experienced any difference as a migrant student in these organizations compared to others. He told, "I think people here have a tolerance for me being from a different race or looking different." He clarified that he treats people with respect and he voiced, "Also, I am respectful towards others, and how I interact with people was no different from how I would treat my neighbor or the person in front of me."

### **Reflections**

Jeff summarized that "any student can thrive in CAMP, but they must also put in the effort." He accentuated that a student with a "drive" to attain a degree in higher education could benefit from CAMP. He expressed, "A student who would do well in CAMP has the drive to better their situation and attain a higher title in their education," and he explained that:

CAMP helps you with college, but there's also the part where you have to do your work and succeed in college. You know, CAMP help initiate the process when you apply. They also give financial assistance. Who wouldn't want that? Any student would thrive in this program.

When Jeff reflected on the CAMP program, he stated, "CAMP placed me in the right direction." Jeff conveyed how CAMP also opened doors for opportunities. Jeff was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the CAMP program and he expressed, "If it were not for CAMP, my alternative option would be to attend another college or a technical college."

## **Lydia: “I Am Brave Now, and I have Found Myself”**

### **Profile and History**

Both Lydia’s mother and father arrived from Mexico in 2001. She and her little sister were born in the United States. Lydia lived with both her parents and her sister in Georgia in a rural, predominately White community:

Mainly White people live in my community. Literally, I was probably one of the only Mexicans in my school. I grew up around many White people, and there was another Hispanic girl in my neighborhood. I was always alone because my sister was seven years younger than I was, and I couldn’t relate to people in my community or school. I live in a rural town. It is so country with lots of farms, and my dad was a farm worker.

When Lydia’s father first arrived in the U.S., he worked in construction but then went to work in agriculture:

My dad has worked since he arrived in the U.S. He worked in construction, and then he went to work in agriculture, milking cows. My dad’s last job was working in the chicken houses. My mother cleans houses for a living now.

Lydia characterized her father as a hard worker and provider. She explained how he would seek work wherever possible and move the family near his job.

### **Secondary Education Challenges and Not Fitting In**

Lydia revealed that starting a new high school was a challenge. The new high school Lydia transferred to assign her a tutor through a Migrant Education Program (MEP). The MEP program assisted in getting Lydia at the same grade level as the other students. MEP also provided her with a mentor to discuss her concerns and address

questions. Lydia did not like having a tutor and pulled out of classes for tutoring. She elaborated that she felt embarrassed and would get mad when the other students teased her for getting extra help. Additionally, Lydia also recounted that she had a tough time acclimating to a new school. She shared that she tried to “fit in.” Lydia divulged how she wanted to talk to other students but felt afraid in the ninth grade and a new high school. She recalled how hard it felt to ask for help or speak to anyone:

My challenge would be finding my resources because of how I felt in a new school. Finding my counselor, Principal, and places I needed to go, like the lunchroom and the library, was difficult. I would get lost in the hallways because it was a big school, and I didn’t know where to go, what to do, or who to ask for help. My biggest challenge in high school was being able to talk to people and ask for help. The Hispanic girls in my school would also pick on me and were bullies.

She stated that being timid prevented her from navigating the high school campus and finding the available resources. Lydia detailed, “My shyness and being in a new environment kept me from speaking up and finding resources.” She also communicated how she was “scared” not to be able to handle the high school environment.

### **Secondary Education Support**

Although high school was challenging for Lydia, she credited her Spanish and healthcare teachers for improving her high school experience:

During my first year in high school, my Spanish teacher was amazing. She would always tell me about the resources available. My healthcare teacher got me into many programs related to my career goals. She made sure that I submitted my



applications for college. She would ask me; did you apply for this or that? She was on top of my applications. She would also ask me if I needed help with my essays for my college application and say to me; I could help with your essay. She was always willing to help me.

Despite Lydia's shyness, teachers inspired and supported her educational goals. Additionally, Lydia conveyed, "My principal was always willing to help with a situation that involved some arguments or confrontations with other girls." She detailed these experiences of being a victim of harassment. The bullying in high school also made her feel like she did not belong or fitted in. She remembered how the principal's investigation of the bullying made her feel "vindicated." The principal recognized she was a victim of bullying, and she felt relieved.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Lydia did not know about the CAMP program. She learned about CAMP from her mother during a monthly MEP meeting. She elaborated that "My mom was the one to tell me about CAMP and how she met the CAMP recruiter." She was not a senior in high school and had to wait another year to apply for CAMP. She expressed, "I was in the 11th grade then and couldn't apply for the CAMP program, but I was interested in applying," and said:

I was already involved in the MEP program because my dad worked in agriculture. MEP was located in my county and held monthly meetings. My mom would regularly attend the meetings they had in the county. My mom met the CAMP recruiter during one of the monthly MEP meetings. The CAMP

recruiter asked my mom if she had any children that were completing high school.

My mom told the CAMP recruiter I have a daughter, and she is in the 11th grade.

During the initial interaction with the CAMP recruiter, she informed Lydia's mother that migrant students could qualify for the CAMP program. Lydia described how her mother was excited to share the news about CAMP with her. She wanted Lydia to pursue her undergraduate studies.

At first, Lydia resonated that she was apprehensive about CAMP and revealed, "I was slightly scared at the beginning of the CAMP program." After reviewing their website, she felt good about her admission to CAMP:

I looked into the program, and I read about it online. I thought this could be a way for me to have a good beginning in college. The CAMP website has information on how they help students. I thought this was going to be a good college experience.

Lydia was enthusiastic about learning about a migrant program at UNG. She explained how the new information about the migrant program was good news. She immediately was interested in applying to CAMP. Additionally, Lydia explained that during her senior year in high school, the CAMP recruiter contacted her about applying to UNG. Lydia articulated that the information the CAMP recruiter provided was helpful:

The CAMP recruiter had my number and reached out to me. The CAMP recruiter told me how great UNG was and how I would do well there. The recruiter explained how CAMP would help me through anything I needed and that I would

not be alone in college. The recruiter also explained that CAMP had a support system already waiting for me.

Lydia elaborated she was the first student to submit her application to CAMP.

Lydia recalled how she always had a goal to attain a college education. She expressed, “The information the CAMP recruiter gave helped me reach my goal of applying to UNG,” and continued saying:

Getting my degree was always my plan, and I participated in the Dual Enrollment program in high school, which kept me thinking about college. I wanted to keep studying and wanted to keep going to school.

Once the CAMP recruiter contacted Lydia to be part of the CAMP program, she started the application process. She was proactive, requested the recommendation letters, and had everything she needed to prepare for the CAMP interview. She explained how she submitted all the required documents to complete her application. She elaborated that “I submitted my CAMP application in October 2019, and all the applications were due in June 2020.” She was thrilled to learn from CAMP that she was the first student that semester to apply.

### **CAMP First-Year Experience Course**

Lydia started CAMP in Fall 2020. She reminisced how excited she felt on her first day of the CAMP orientation. Lydia highlighted CAMP encouraged her to speak and interact with faculty. She detailed her experience with a class assignment to schedule a mock interview with a faculty member. This assignment was instrumental in making her realize that she was no longer a high school student and was now an “adult.” She went on to say:

Every CAMP student must take a first-year experience class during the first semester of college. The CAMP staff teaches the class. The CAMP staff teaches how to study and how to search for resources. In the class, I learned how to write a resume and career stuff, that is important when you are ready to get a job. For one assignment, we had to take a tour around the campus.

Lydia added she had another assignment to schedule a meeting with Career Services and set up a mock interview with one of the faculty there. She explained, “That is when I first started to notice that this is real life.” The mock interview was vital in developing Lydia’s confidence. She described how she did well during the mock interview. She also learned how to use the available resources UNG offered:

When the faculty asked questions during the mock interview, I bragged about myself and what I could do. They asked me to tell them about myself and what I’ve done in life. The assignment was a good start to getting me to talk to people.

Lydia realized that she would be fine in her new college environment, and she was now maturing. She expressed, “I thought, okay, I can speak to a grown-up.” She shared how she felt uncomfortable speaking to adults. The mock interview made Lydia realize she was now an adult and could talk to other adults.

Lastly, Lydia communicated how she was comfortable interacting with her biology professors. She was interested in pursuing a medical degree and knew she must apply herself to reach her goal:

In my second semester of college, I took a biology course, which is my major. I got to know all my professors and started looking for research opportunities. I talked to my professors about how they made it through their education. One of

my professors went to medical school, and I was interested in how he did it. I would ask him if he could tell me what he did to get into medical school. If I apply myself in my classes and interact with my professors, I can reach my goal.

The CAMP encouragement to seek the assistance of professors was helpful for Lydia. Further, Lydia learned that talking with her professors was valuable in understanding her class work and achieving her academic goals.

### **Postsecondary Challenges**

During Lydia's first semester of college, she did well in her classes. Yet, she did not do well in her second semester with the assignments. Even with academic support from CAMP, Lydia struggled. Lydia shared her disappointment in not doing well in her classes. She questioned if she was capable of succeeding in college:

The CAMP staff was always there checking on me. CAMP was a good program for me. It was helpful, but I didn't know how I could study better with my parents telling me to be home early. I was feeling like I wasn't going to make it. I often asked myself what I should do, but I never thought of leaving school. I kept thinking I want to be a doctor and how I would get there with these grades.

Although Lydia struggled with her grades and could not stay on campus to study, she continued her undergraduate studies. She elaborated that "My grades suffered because I could not stay in school long enough to study, but I never thought to drop out." She found a way to continue with her undergraduate studies and expressed, "I never thought that leaving UNG was an option."

Furthermore, Lydia delineated how the CAMP retention coordinator was the one

she would talk to a lot. During her difficulties with her grades, the CAMP retention coordinator required Lydia to seek therapy. She explained, “The CAMP retention coordinator told me I needed to go to therapy and talk with a therapist,” and continued:

I would tell the CAMP retention coordinator I want to be here but can’t because my parents will get mad at me. The CAMP retention coordinator made me see a therapist and discuss my situation. It was a requirement for me to go to a therapy session.

CAMP referred Lydia to a therapist to seek help. Lydia went to the therapist but explained that she did not want to disclose her issues to the therapist, which could not identify with her. Instead, she felt comfortable talking to the CAMP staff because they could relate to her concerns. “The CAMP retention coordinator was always willing to listen to me and give me tissues when I was sad.” Lydia described the CAMP retention coordinator as an individual with a kind heart. She felt comfortable sharing her feelings with the CAMP retention coordinator.

Another challenge Lydia experienced was managing her time and daily class schedule. “The CAMP retention coordinator was always willing to listen to anybody about their problems and was helpful with recommending other resources.” Lydia explained that with the guidance of CAMP, she learned how to utilize her time efficiently between school and home. She elaborated that “I know when I have to drop off my textbooks or order my textbooks.” She also manages her doctor and dentist appointments between school and home.

## **College and Family Obligations**

Lydia noted that she did not have any problems with anyone on campus. However, she expressed her challenge was managing her studies while managing her parents' daily errands. Furthermore, Lydia explained her parents are not legal residents in the U.S. and do not have a driver's license. She was responsible for their mode of transportation. Lydia continued to detail her frustration with her parents and how it made her feel that they did not understand college:

I asked myself why my parents had to be this way and expected that I drive them everywhere. Why don't they understand that I want to have an education and do better for myself? Why do I have to be this person? I also have to help my sister with homework.

It is difficult for Lydia to manage her course assignments and family obligations. Often, she could not prioritize her schoolwork because she helps her sister with homework. She stressed that living at home and going to college was still challenging.

## **Motivation to Pursue a College Degree**

Lydia's motivation to pursue her educational endeavors was her parent's. "My parents have a really big impact on my motivation to continue her education." Lydia characterized her dad as her "hero," and went on to say:

My dad is my hero. I see him come from work, and it makes me sad to see him tired and dirty. He does all this work just for us. So, I sit there and watch him, and I tell myself I need to continue going to school because I want to provide for him. I want to say here's a ranch for you. This gift is from me to you. I want to be able to give them a place to live.

Although Lydia's parents do not understand the higher education process, she emphasized that her mother supports her academic achievements. She voiced, "My mom is the biggest supporter of my achievements." She told how her mother's "excitement is rewarding." She also clarified how her parents help her financially:

When I graduated from high school, my mom was freaking out because she never got a diploma. She was excited about me graduating high school and getting any minor achievements that I had. She's always celebrated with me. So, when I get recognition or a reward, I always take it to her first because I know she will be excited for me.

Moreover, Lydia said her parents also helped her pay her cell phone bills while pursuing her college degree. Her parents expect her to attend classes and not worry about her finances. She highlighted that her parents' help with her "bills are exceptionally nice."

### **CAMP Support**

The CAMP staff and professors made Lydia's first year of college a success. She detailed how CAMP, and her professors were instrumental in completing her first year of college:

CAMP and my professors helped me through my first year of college. CAMP gave me so many resources and information. They helped with my resume. They would initiate and contact my professors when I had questions. They also taught me how to write an email to my professors whenever I needed help with something. The CAMP staff was always there if I needed help. I could go to



them for anything. My professors also helped me. I asked them if I needed something, and they were always available.

In addition to the support from CAMP and professors, Lydia attended all the weekly CAMP cohort meetings. Lydia shared her gratitude with CAMP for allowing her to stay in the program Lydia another semester because she did not do well academically during her second semester in college. Staying enrolled in the CAMP program for an additional semester was instrumental in giving her the academic support for Lydia to continue her college education journey:

So, because you had to have certain credits to continue to your second year of college, and I failed some classes during my second semester, CAMP didn't allow me to complete the program my first year. I was in the CAMP program for another semester. I stayed three semesters with CAMP, and they helped me get to my second year of college.

Lydia shared how the CAMP decision to allow her to stay another semester in the program was vital to her college success. She was able to get an additional semester of academic support from CAMP. Lydia realized that being a migrant student benefitted her, and CAMP gave her the resources to navigate the college environment and aspire to reach her goals.

### **Benefits of Being a Migrant Student**

Lydia was a student researcher and works closely with her professor on poultry research. She was also a prospect for Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc., a Latin-based sorority, and was working on founding a chapter at UNG. When asked how being a migrant college student influenced Lydia's involvement in student organizations and

interactions with peers outside the CAMP activities, she said, “I am brave now, and I have found myself.”

In conclusion, Lydia affirmed her bravery. Lydia could now handle and confront situations. She has developed the skills to be involved in other activities. “I feel I can talk to anybody and can ask for help.” Lydia now takes the initiative to make her college experience successful.

### **Reflections**

In summary, Lydia emphasized that a migrant student with a similar background would benefit from CAMP. She reflected on how the CAMP was a good program, and she benefited from its services. The CAMP staff always ensured she completed her study hours and scheduled monthly mandatory meetings to check how she was doing in her classes. CAMP also provided her with academic, emotional, and financial support. Overall, Lydia expressed her gratitude for the CAMP program because it also helped her realize she was an adult. She was now able to speak with others without being afraid.

### **Nevil: “Like Climbing a Mountain”**

#### **Profile and History**

Nevil grew up in Guatemala with his grandmother and moved to the U.S. in 2006 when he was eight. He portrayed the community in Guatemala as a “Very impoverished environment and not living in a happy place.” His parents were also from Guatemala and arrived in the U.S. sometime in the late 1990s. “My parents were here way before I came here.” Nevil explained how he did not know English when he arrived in the U.S. and did not know his parents because he had been in Guatemala for so many

years. He expressed, “Honestly, it felt like I was adopted; I was not used to my family,” and he continued to explain that:

I had no connection with my parents. I did not learn English, and in Guatemala, they do not teach English classes to third graders. Personally, I was not used to my family. I had never met my parents before arriving in the U.S. I had a brother and met him once or twice, but I had no relationship or connections with him. So, it felt like arriving in the U.S. was coming into a new world.

In addition to adjusting to his family in the U.S., Nevil recalled moving numerous times throughout Georgia. He lost count of how many times his family moved but recounted moving at least nine times. The constant moves and getting to know his parents were challenging for Nevil. His parents finally settled when he started high school in Dalton, Georgia. Nevil detailed how he was the oldest of four siblings. Both his parents worked in agriculture. They first started harvesting crops and then became seasonal farmworkers. He conveyed how his father transitioned into the poultry industry to maintain the chicken houses, and then he worked in landscaping.

### **Primary and Secondary Education Challenges**

Nevil reflected on his experience with adverse treatment and “discrimination” in the third grade. He expressed how he felt it was due to his language barrier and because he was from a different country. He had to repeat the third grade due to a lack of English proficiency.

In addition, Nevil gave an account of his financial and social challenges in high school and his future realization. His feelings of despair and the desire to find an outlet were evident as he continued to focus on his education. The most significant struggles in

high school Nevil experienced were his family's financial barriers and transportation. His mother did not have legal status in the U.S., had no driver's license, and could not drive. He elaborated on how his father was the only family member with a driver's license and a vehicle. Yet, his father was never available and away working. The family depended on their father for transportation, which was impossible to rely on since he was never home:

I guess the last two years of high school went fast for me to realize how I was feeling and facing. I didn't stay much after school. Maybe a few times to do community service. I didn't have a job after school either because I didn't have a social security number at the time or transportation.

Unsure of his future after high school, he elucidated how joining the military was an option for getting out of his circumstance. Fortunately, things got better when he received his documents to legally permit him to live and work in the U.S. Nevil's prospects of attending college were now possible.

### **Secondary Education Support**

Although high school was financially difficult for Nevil and his family, he focused on studying and reading books. He participated in many school activities scheduled during school hours. His active school activities allowed him to avoid the reality of his hardships:

In my junior of high school, I joined the ROTC program. ROTC offered various activities during school hours. I got involved with the ROTC rifle team, color guard, drill team, academic team, leadership team, and everything they had. I also joined their engineering program.

Joining the ROTC program in high school proved to be a positive platform for Nevil. These activities were not after school, and he could participate in all ROTC activities during school hours.

In addition to the ROTC program being instrumental during high school, Nevil recognized two teachers that made his high school experience successful. One of his teachers was from Puerto Rico and spoke Spanish. Nevil disclosed how it was good to encounter and have a Spanish-speaking male professional as his mentor. Nevil shared that two weeks before high school graduation, he received his legal documentation to live in the U.S. Nevil enthusiastically told how his legal documents changed the trajectory of his educational endeavors.

### **Family Communication and Educational Challenges**

Nevil recollected the barriers he encountered with his parents to pursue an education. He wanted them to know how challenging it was to acclimate to the new schools. Despite all of the obstacles, Nevil knew he was able to overcome and accept his new life. The language barrier with Nevil's parents was challenging for him as a student. Although Nevil's mother had limited English skills, he expressed how she offered him emotional support and encouraged him with his academics in high school. He elaborated that "My mom tried her best to be supportive." However, he explained how his father was not supportive of his education:

My mom was somewhat supportive. Due to my mom's English language barrier, I had to translate all the documents I brought home from school. Not only for myself but my siblings also. She supported me emotionally and encouraged me to continue pursuing my dream and keep moving forward. She would say these

things, but I knew she felt I wouldn't get far without proper documentation. At the time, I was not legal in the U.S.

Nevil's mother tried to support him with his education. However, her language barrier made it challenging to provide Nevil with the needed support. On the contrary, Nevil divulged how his father was not supportive of his education. He did not value the commitment Nevil would put into studying:

My dad, on the other hand, was the opposite. I remember staying up late at night to study for my AP courses, and he would tell me to stop doing whatever you're doing because I was disturbing my siblings. I would move to the living room to continue studying, and he insisted I stop studying and sleep. He would discourage me from doing well in school. He did not understand the AP classes were challenging for me, especially not having the resources.

His father's discouragement made Nevil feel sad and somewhat confused. Nevil shared that he did not understand why his father would dissuade him from studying while trying to be a good student.

### **Pioneering CAMP**

Nevil learned about the CAMP program from the CAMP recruiter, who would regularly visit his high school to meet with migrant students. At the time, Nevil was not interested in learning about the CAMP program. He wanted to attend another college out of state and had no desire to stay in Georgia:

The CAMP recruiter randomly showed up at my high school. One day the CAMP recruiter met with me and asked if I was a migrant student. Somehow the Migrant Education Program coordinator at my high school connected me with the CAMP

recruiter. At the time, I had no desire to be part of the CAMP program or stay in Georgia.

Due to the divorce of his parents and the need to assist his mother financially, Nevil could not attend college out of state and worked in a factory. He explained that after a year of working, he remembered the CAMP program at UNG. CAMP was now an option to stay in Georgia and pursue a college degree:

Working in a factory was a tough job, and I realized I could not make a living. I decided to return to school, and I remember the CAMP program and the opportunity to cover at least one year of college tuition.

Nevil explained how he did not like working in a factory and needed to change his current circumstances. He yearned to continue his education and attain a college degree. His goal was to attend UNG through the CAMP program. “With CAMP, the program pays for at least one year of college.” Nevil contacted the CAMP recruiter and asked if he could apply for CAMP. He delineated how happy he felt when the CAMP recruiter told him he was eligible for CAMP.

Nevil reminisced how the CAMP recruiter scheduled a meeting with him to discuss the program. He expressed how he felt about the CAMP recruiter driving a long distance to meet with him:

I remember the CAMP recruiter driving two hours from the UNG campus to meet with me. I couldn't believe the CAMP recruiter would drive two hours to have a one-on-one meeting with me. It was an amazing feeling and mind-blowing. It is crazy that someone took the time to tell me about CAMP and the scholarship

opportunities. The connection with the CAMP recruiter was sincere. We established a relationship of trust because the CAMP recruiter cared.

The CAMP recruiter's effort to meet with him in person made Nevil feel great. He had stayed home after high school and worked and helped his family financially, and now he had an opportunity to go to college. He highlighted how this was the "beginning of a valuable relationship with CAMP."

Pursuing a college degree was essential for Nevil. His mother was relieved, Nevil was staying in Georgia for college. Nevil's mother was hesitant but somewhat supportive of his educational endeavors when he decided to attend UNG. He expressed, "My mother was a little better with me attending UNG than going off to another state, which helped my decision to go to college." Nevil explained how his mother understood that it was significant for him to pursue an education. His father was no longer living with the family and not providing for the family. His mother relied on Nevil for financial support, but she knew his determination to seek an undergraduate program. When Nevil decided to attend college, she was comfortable with his decision to stay in Georgia.

### **CAMP Orientation**

When Nevil first got accepted into the CAMP program, he it did not consider it "a big deal." He explained that CAMP was an alternative decision to attending college. He started the CAMP program in the Spring of 2017. Nevil quickly realized participating in the CAMP program was one of the "best decisions," and he continued to say:

Retrospectively, I know attending CAMP was the best decision I could have made. Yet, at the time, it didn't feel that way, and I thought, I'm going to go to this nearby school. I thought it was not a prestigious school, but I would do great.



I had always done awesome in my classes in high school. I took AP classes and was academically competitive in all my class subjects. Attending UNG was a way to have a better lifestyle without missing out on what was happening back home. I was still living in the same state if my family needed help.

Since Nevil had previously attended an orientation at another college, he did not have any expectations with the CAMP orientation. He explained orientation was mandatory for all new CAMP students:

Ultimately, I enjoyed the CAMP Orientation. The CAMP orientation is different from the UNG orientation. But when I attended the CAMP orientation, I was presented with various opportunities, and that is when I felt like the world was in my hands. I could envision how I could do so much more. During the CAMP orientation, I talked to other people about the opportunities available through CAMP at UNG. I learned how CAMP was so much more and different.

The CAMP orientation was a positive experience for Nevil. He learned of many available resources and opportunities with CAMP. He continued explaining that “applying to the CAMP program was the best decision.”

### **College and Family Obligations**

During the first year of college, Nevil’s parents’ divorce created more challenges for him. His mother burdened him with the finances and relied on him for financial and emotional support. He elaborated that “Ultimately, things just kept getting financially worse after my parents divorced.” With the assistance of CAMP, Nevil received a paying internship. He also worked after classes to help his family. In addition, Nevil conveyed how fortunate he was that CAMP provided scholarships to cover tuition for his first year

of college and stipends. He expressed, “The financial support was great for me.” However, Nevil told how his family circumstance affected him emotionally, and CAMP helped him. Nevil disclosed how he wanted to help his mother. He explained:

I felt the need to go back home. I thought it was my responsibility to help my family. I had a lot going on in my life. My second semester was rough. It was also tough emotionally. During that second semester, I came across the coaching aspect of the CAMP program.

The CAMP staff and coaches helped Nevil through his most difficult times with family issues. He recalled how the CAMP staff and coaches motivated him to continue his studies. During this time, Nevil realized how “the coaching services CAMP provided became important.” Nevil shared his challenges with the CAMP staff and revealed his vulnerability, letting them know about his need to drop out of college to help his mother financially:

In reality, it is not the children’s responsibility to handle parents’ problems. The CAMP coaches were reaching out and wanting to talk to me. They could see I was struggling. I felt numb and realized that those CAMP coaching meetings helped and that I needed more of it. The CAMP coach was alerted of my performance and would tell me how I could be doing so much more, but I wasn’t. I stopped attending the mandatory study hall hours and did not attend the CAMP cohort meetings. So then I decided to reach out to them. I was vulnerable when I let the CAMP staff know I was struggling.

Nevertheless, Nevil knew he was not meeting the requirements to be in the

CAMP program because of his emotional struggles. He described, “I was not performing well academically and in my internship.” He shared that the CAMP staff coaches were available to provide him with emotional support and assist him.

Nevil illustrated how the CAMP staff counseling and coaching services helped him academically and emotionally continue his education. The CAMP staff helped him with guilt for not financially supporting his family:

The CAMP staff got me through the worst year of my life. Even when my family, who loved and supported me, did not understand why I was going to college, the CAMP counselors allowed me to believe in myself. I worked in a coffee shop and felt guilty for having access to food when my siblings were experiencing financial hardship.

Further, Nevil stated how the CAMP Director and one of the coaches were instrumental in his college success and motivated him to continue his college education. Especially when he struggled during his second semester:

They both told me that if you can’t help yourself, how do you expect to help others? That, for me, was just ground-shaking. I did not understand that concept, so that made me realize I had to step up. I had already started college, so why stop? I could help my family by helping myself first.

The CAMP staff allowed Nevil to return to the program in his second year. Through CAMP support services, he was able to establish boundaries and his priorities. He felt, “I had the support of CAMP and the CAMP alumni and a role model.”

## **Postsecondary Success**

Nevil explained that during his second year of college, he decided to express his feelings and challenges to his family and requested they stop calling him with issues at home. “They were getting out of hand, and I had to stop it.” He decided it was time to set boundaries and inform his family members that he needed support. He confided how it was the most challenging conversation with his family:

The CAMP coaches trained me on how to have a conversation with my family and set those limits and boundaries. I learned what I could handle and what I couldn’t handle while I was in college. I wanted them to know they needed to support me being in college. I decided I could no longer be on the phone for two and a half hours when I could be spending that time studying and prepping for my classes. I told them not to call every day and expect me to talk for two and half hours. I needed to limit the calls and set those boundaries. I realized I could not help them and was not helping myself by talking every day for two or more hours. The issues at home were not in my control.

The techniques and tools the CAMP coaches provided led Nevil to confront his family. Nevil elucidated how his brothers were hesitant at first, and his mother was upset. It was not a comfortable conversation, but Nevil knew it was the right decision to set boundaries with his family. “We had three or four discussions on that topic before my mother understood, and they decided they could support me.” Finally, Nevil was able to establish boundaries with his family.

Nevil graduated from UNG in December 2020 with his bachelor’s degree and now works at UNG as a professional. It was a pivotal moment in his life to earning a

college degree. He was the first member of his family to attend college and the first in his family to attain a college degree. He defined being the first in his family as “astronomical.” He compared his accomplishments “like climbing a mountain.”

He proceeded to detail his conversation and emotions as he expounded on the accomplishments of receiving an undergraduate degree to his mother. Nevil talked with his mother about his graduation and the degree he was receiving. He explained to his mother that he was the first member in their family’s history to reach this level of education:

Nobody in my family has ever graduated college before me. Period! I am the first one in my family to get a degree. I told her we’re making history. She cried and was tearing up because she didn’t comprehend what I had accomplished. I had already received my Associate degree, and that was amazing. She did not understand what it meant to earn a bachelor’s degree. I told her what it signified and what was happening with my education. I explained how I was the only one in my family to experience going to college; nobody in the family had these experiences like me. I expressed how this moment of my education was special. My mother cried, and she apologized, and she thanked me for all the things that I had to go through to accomplish getting a degree.

Nevil’s conversation with his mother and explaining the significance of his educational journey were crucial. Nevil described how he wanted his mother to understand his excitement and momentous accomplishment of earning a college degree.

## **Benefits of Being a Migrant Student**

Nevil accentuated that being a migrant college student was a great experience. He explained how CAMP allowed him to work as an intern and suggested Nevil apply for the resident assistant (RA) at the apartments off-campus designated for CAMP students. He told how he got the position, which gave him “financial stability,” and said:

I took advantage of the CAMP internship and RA opportunities. I engaged socially with my peers, which helped me develop a leadership style that I didn't have before. I learned to believe in myself and do well academically. CAMP required student participants to perform academically well also. CAMP also instructed me to meet and interact with my faculty.

With support from CAMP, Nevil no longer worried about his well-being and financial situation. He expressed, “I was good with all my scholarships, and I was financially covered.” He recognized the support from the CAMP coaches, and his role model helped him learn to focus on his education first before his family issues. He shared, “I had a role model to look up to, and that new concept of helping myself before others was what triggered my life change, and I continue pursuing education.”

Furthermore, Nevil explained how he was involved in UNG's Migrant Student Union and served as president from fall 2018 to spring 2019. In addition, in Fall 2019, Nevil emphasized he became a founding member of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. He explained that the organization was the first Latin non-profit social fraternity in the U.S. Nevil proudly described how he and two other migrant students were instrumental in establishing the first Latin fraternity at UNG. Nevil noted he continued to be active with the fraternity.

## **Reflections**

Nevil would recommend the CAMP program “without hesitation.” The CAMP program was significant in Nevil’s college experience, and he went on to say:

As migrant students, we learned about the opportunities CAMP offers with scholarships and funds to help financially. When I needed help reviewing my classes and registration, the CAMP Counselor was there to help. The peer mentors were there to help me. The CAMP program support system, in essence, was successful in helping me.

Nevil illuminated that “students needing a support system, help and guidance, not necessarily financially, but academic guidance” would benefit from a program like CAMP. He also remarked that “driven students” would also benefit from CAMP. He detailed, “I know that the CAMP provides the tools, but it’s ultimately up to the student to decide whether they will do it or not.”

Nevil reflected how CAMP went “above and beyond” to provide support for him and other migrant students. In conclusion, he described the CAMP program as “One of the best experiences I have ever had, and I recommend it without hesitation.” CAMP helped him through his financial struggles and provided financial assistance to pay for his tuition during his first year of college. Nevil highlighted the CAMP Director, Coaches, Counselor, and Retention Coordinator made his experience in college successful. Lastly, Nevil expressed how he looks up to the Director and was grateful for being part of the CAMP program.

**Scott: “Just Because We Grew Up Differently, Doesn’t Mean We Cannot not do  
Better for Ourselves”**

**Profile and History**

Scott was a non-traditional college student. He was 31 years old and started the CAMP program in January 2016 but completed the program in the fall of 2017. He was the first in his family to attend college. He explained, “I’m a first-generation college student and the first family member to attend college.” Scott shared his parents were born in Mexico and did not attend school past the fifth grade. He further disclosed how he has two children and four siblings. He was the oldest male of four siblings and identified as Mexican American. He, his oldest sister, and his brother were born in Texas. His youngest brother was born in Georgia.

Scott’s parents moved the family to Georgia from Texas in 1996. He lived at home in Georgia with his parents and siblings. In Texas, Scott recalled how they lived in a lumber community. He remembered living near two lumber mills and their proximity to his home. While they lived in Texas, his father worked in the lumber mills, and his mother stayed home to take care of her young family. Scott continued to explain how for the last 20 years, his father has worked as a crane operator for a recycling metal company in Georgia. Moving and starting a new school was always a challenge for Scott. He shared how attending predominately White schools in Georgia was different from his school community in Texas. In particular, he expressed his challenges with the language barrier throughout his education. Scott had challenges attending primary and secondary schools in Georgia due to his limited English skills. Due to his language barrier, he “disliked reading” from elementary until high school, which was difficult throughout his



educational journey. Scott continued to share that he did not do well in his high school English classes. Nevertheless, he excelled in his Spanish classes in high school and was in Spanish AP classes.

### **The Pursuit of Higher Education**

Scott decided to attend college while working in the emergency department at the hospital, and his supervisor bypassed him for any promotion opportunities. Scott divulged that he was setting the path for his family to pursue an undergraduate degree:

While working, I notice that no matter how hard you work or how good of a worker you are, unless you have a higher education, especially in a medical field, you can only get so far in your career. Just because we grew up differently doesn't mean we cannot do better for ourselves. So, I decided it was time to get my college degree. I chose to apply to UNG because, one, it was affordable, and two, it was close to home. I am close if there was an emergency at home or my son needs me.

Affordability and accessibility were essential in Scott's decision to apply to UNG. "It was important to go to a college near my son in case he needed me." He desired a change and decided to pursue his college education which was convenient near his home. Scott attended UNG's open house as a prospective undergraduate student to learn more about admissions. He mentioned that he had never heard of the CAMP program before the open house at UNG. He detailed how he learned about CAMP during UNG's open house:

I attended an Open House at the UNG Gainesville campus to learn about applying for college. The open house was very informative. They had all these programs

at the open house and booths with the academic advisor, the registration office, and all the different offices of the university. I saw the CAMP booth, and I walked up to the recruiter. I was interested in learning about CAMP. The CAMP recruiter asked me if I had heard about the CAMP program. I told her no, but I still filled out the information form she had for CAMP and listed my phone number, my birthday, and my name on the form. I didn't know anything about CAMP. I guess the less education you have, the less you understand what is available.

Scott added that he gave the CAMP recruiter his contact information, and within a few weeks, the recruiter texted him that he was eligible for CAMP. He was surprised at first to learn of his eligibility. However, CAMP's financial support made attending UNG even more appealing.

It was perplexing for Scott that he qualified for the CAMP program. He was not aware his parents worked in agriculture. However, Scott elaborated he was eligible for the CAMP program because his parents registered him in school as a migrant:

The CAMP recruiter followed up after I completed the form and told me that I qualified. According to the paperwork the high school had on file about me, it listed me as a migrant, and I was in the Migrant Education Program for the schools in Georgia. I didn't know what MEP or CAMP was.

Scott confirmed with his parents that they "worked in agriculture for a long time." His mother completed forms while he was in the second grade and registered him as a migrant student. Scott was happy he was eligible for CAMP because he was in the MEP program.

## **College and Family Obligations**

There was never a time when Scott felt that he should leave college. Instead, he explained how he transitioned from working full-time to part-time when he started UNG. Nevertheless, his employer was not flexible with his work schedule, so he chose to leave that job. He expressed, “They weren’t flexible as I thought they would be, so I left that job in 2019,” and he continued saying:

When I started college, I worked in the emergency room at a hospital. I changed my hours to work part-time. I was under the impression that they would help me with my work schedule, but it turned out they were not flexible. I had to leave that job and get another flexible job.

The decision to change to a part-time status was not easy for Scott. He articulated that although he was a part-time student, “I do not consider it part-time because I am still registered for nine college credits each semester.”

In addition, Scott delineated how he finds the “courage” to continue his educational endeavors. Scott stated that he does not experience any challenges with his family because he was attending college. He elaborated that “No, I never experienced any barriers with my family to attend college, or they sidetrack me from going to college.” Nonetheless, he often sought advice from his classmates who were also non-traditional college students or individuals who graduated college while juggling family, school, and work:

I had some difficult times, but one way or another, I just found the courage to keep going to college. I know older people that went to college as an adult and graduated. I often ask them how they did it going to college at a later stage in life

when they were older. I asked them how they handled going to college when they got to this certain plateau and how they overcame it.

To navigate his personal and undergraduate studies, Scott sought the advice of his Non-traditional classmates on how they handle the challenges with their academics and family obligations. He explained, “I especially ask my classmates who work full time and have kids if they ever felt this way and whatnot?” He inquired if they were involved in campus activities and organizations and how they could manage them. Scott noted these students encouraged him and helped him understand he was not alone.

### **CAMP Support**

Scott felt “relieved” during his first day of the CAMP orientation. He expressed, “I was relieved that there were going to be more people with the same struggles as me.” He highlighted that when he started CAMP, he was six years older than the other students. Yet, he immediately discovered how his cohort “shared the same struggles.” He learned that his CAMP peers also had similar challenges in high school and were also first-generation college students.

Scott reminisced on his CAMP experience during his first year at UNG. He voiced, “When I first started CAMP, it was pretty welcoming.” He specified that the CAMP program was new when he participated, and the program structure was different. However, Scott feels that the CAMP program has evolved and gotten strict with its requirements:

CAMP gave you a lot of resources. The CAMP program was new when I started. So, they were very grateful that you started college and were part of the CAMP

program. The CAMP staff let us know about the financial opportunities and the compensation you receive for being in the program.

CAMP provided Scott with financial support and stipends during his first year at UNG. The financial support and resources helped him complete his first year of college.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott explained he was behind in college credits. He was now a second-year student taking classes at UNG. Scott expressed how the rapid changes in the university due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected his enrollment. The university announcement regarding COVID-19 and informing the campus community that instruction would go online was challenging for him. However, during this time, Scott noted that CAMP offered ZOOM meetings to CAMP students and CAMP alums to discuss their well-being and the adjustments to online instructions. The CAMP staff checked how students were doing and whether they needed help or food. Scott mentioned it was nice that the CAMP staff engaged the CAMP alumni in these Zoom group sessions and sent their current student participants a care package to their apartments.

### **Postsecondary Support**

Scott regarded his academic experience as “fairly well and good.” “The professors care for their students.” He recognized that the professors who assisted him helped his morale to continue attending classes. He also noted that he had no challenging experiences with faculty and staff. Jeff expressed, “The faculty and staff would always hear me on what I needed, but it wasn’t challenging,” and he carry on by saying:

My academic experience has been fairly well, and good. The majority of faculty and staff at UNG are very nice. My professors really care about my learning and completing my class. Because when I reached out to them throughout the semester and let them know I needed assistance with the course, they would help me.

Further, Scott emphasized how his professors guided him to pass the course. They assisted him by giving him extra credit assignments to pass their class. He also noted that sometimes his professors would provide him with extra help on course assignments. They recommended he revised his assignments and resubmit. Ultimately, his professors wanted him to learn and do well. Scott said, “My professors helped my morale, and students with positive morale want to attend class.”

Scott was also an orientation leader for a program that assisted adult learners. He credited the orientation leadership program for facilitating his interactions with other faculty and departments. He expressed that:

As the orientation leader, I got more exposed to faculty and staff and got to know them better. I always had good interactions with faculty and staff. It actually got even better after I was in the orientation leadership program during the spring, summer, and fall of 2019.

In the position as an orientation leader, Scott worked during orientation, and he interacted with faculty and staff. As the orientation leader, he networked with UNG members and developed relationships, which helped his academic endeavors.

## **Benefits and Challenges of Being a Migrant Student**

Being a migrant student was a positive influenced on Scott. He explained that as a CAMP alumnus, he could contact the CAMP staff anytime if he needed assistance or guidance. “The CAMP staff always told us that even if we are former participants, to contact them if we need help...they will let us know if they can help or advise on where to get help.”

CAMP had a significant impact on Scott’s first-year college experience. The support and guidance CAMP provided made his undergraduate studies experience successful. He voiced, “I used a lot of the resources CAMP offered me.” Scott appreciated the resources, and the academic and financial services CAMP provided him while he was a CAMP student:

CAMP allocated and dedicated spots in the Writing Center for the CAMP students weekly. I went to the Writing Center a lot. I would go and sign up all the time. There was always someone there to help me. No matter what I needed, they helped me. The Writing Center helped me fix my essays or taught me the correct format. CAMP also allowed me to borrow a laptop for the entire first year of college because I didn’t have a computer. They were sturdy and reliable laptops, and I was able to do my work on these laptops.

The financial and academic support CAMP provided was beneficial for Scott. He accentuated how the stipends were extremely helpful for his personal needs. He commented that he used the funds allocated to him by CAMP to pay his light, gas bills, and buy groceries. He remembered the “grocery stipend was around 60 bucks a week,” and he was so grateful that he had the financial assistance of CAMP.

Scott further illustrated how the CAMP program provided workshops and webinars on how to be successful in college. The programs offered by CAMP guided and connected him to the resources and other student support services:

CAMP taught me how to navigate the college environment and its resources.

They taught me how to handle difficult situations and what departments to go to if I needed help. I didn't know about the support services for students. I didn't know about other student programs in college. They also guided me on how to contact instructors and what's the best way to reach them. They taught us how to write emails. You could say email etiquette. Personally, I didn't know how to write a proper email or address someone in an email or anything like that.

CAMP encouraged Scott to be involved in extracurricular activities. Scott was active in various student clubs and organizations. He was a member of the UNG Spanish debate club and the UNG English debate club. Scott was also a member of the politically incorrect club. "It's like the politically incorrect club because there are some heated topics." He was also a founding member of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc., the first Latino Greek organization at the UNG campus.

In summary, Scott disclosed as a migrant college student; it was easy for him to meet other UNG students that were not in CAMP. He expressed, "It was easier for me to meet people because they connected to someone in the CAMP program," and said:

There were a lot of us in the CAMP program. We were all close, and it was easier for me to be involved in college because I knew all the CAMP students. We made friends with other students outside of CAMP, and we introduced our new friends to each other. It was like a domino effect of meeting new students. That's



how I got involved in the orientation leadership program because some former CAMP students were orientation leaders and told me about the program.

Scott elaborated, “There is a tight bond between the CAMP students.” Although they were all migrant students, each had their distinctive interests. Scott told how his CAMP cohorts shared their knowledge and referred them to possible opportunities.

### **Reflections**

Scott concluded that “migrant students can benefit from CAMP because they learn more about themselves in this program.” He delineated that many students may not know they are eligible for CAMP. He explained that:

Many students do not realize they can apply for the program because they have parents that are migrant workers. The type of student that would benefit from CAMP is anybody in the migrant community. A migrant student will learn a lot about who they are in CAMP, and it is a steppingstone for somebody else behind it.

He reflected on how the CAMP program helped him tremendously. He has no family members who went to college to guide him or to serve as mentors. With the support of CAMP, he was pursuing his goal of a college degree. In summary, the impact of CAMP on Scott’s undergraduate endeavors has been overwhelmingly positive. His motivation was to attain a college degree and be an example to his family. With the support of CAMP, he could strive toward his goals and provide a better future for himself and his children.

## Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented narratives of eight migrant students intended to explore the lived experiences and perceptions in the CAMP program at a PWI. The participants' autobiographical accounts provided an awareness of their CAMP program experiences. Each participant shared their recollections and emotions and compared them to their experiences in the CAMP program. Some participants framed their prior educational experiences in a negative light and conveyed these former experiences as less than desirable compared to their educational experiences in the CAMP program. As a result, these comparisons suggested a transition in developing their personal growth as CAMP students. The following chapter highlights the study's findings and common themes among participants and describes how the CAMP program shaped migrant students' meaning of these experiences.

## **Chapter V**

### **FINDINGS**

The purpose of the study was to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterized their experiences in the CAMP program at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south. This study examined eight participants' personal stories and experiences in the CAMP program. The eight participants also reflected and shared their stories before participating in the CAMP program. The data analysis revealed many unexpected themes and subthemes that were unsettling for the researcher. In addition to the multiple barriers migrant students already experienced, the stories of isolation, loneliness and their experience of microaggressions were disconcerting. The participants' accounts of microaggressions in high school were pivotal in understanding how these hostile acts distributed their growth and development and added a stigma to their identity. The participants experienced multiple adversities in pursuit of higher education. However, each participants shared their experience with barriers and desire to earn a college degree. Additionally, the participants viewed CAMP as an essential factor and a significant influence on their undergraduate education success.

Assigning pseudonyms was essential to protect the identity of the participants and vital when transcribing the interviews (Seidman, 2013). Table 2 presents the self-disclosures of the eight participants' brief demographic information and descriptive ethnicity. The semi-structured individual interviews resulted in rich, descriptive qualitative data (Seidman, 2013). The interviews of the participants ceased once the study results reached data saturation, and no new themes emerged (Patton, 2015).

The following research questions serve as a guide for this study.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

Conducting qualitative research was the most appropriate for the study. Using a narrative inquiry approach provided the framework to make meaning of migrant students' stories and experiences. This design presented how migrant students shaped their world and developed their experiences. The narrative inquiry method allowed participants to engage in conversations and describe their experiences through living and telling their thoughts and memories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry gave each participant a voice as they defined their perspective within the social construct of personal meaning-making and interpreting their experience (Baxter Magolda, 2004). The open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C for the interview question guide) obtained data from the participants representing the essence of their experience from their subjective perspectives (Seidman, 2013). To understand the context of the participants' experiences, questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities. The reconstruction and meaning of participants' experiences were followed with questions 12-26, which asked about their experiences and perceptions as migrant students who participated in a CAMP program at a PWI. The data collected illuminated the migrant students' lived experiences through their lens.

In addition, the data collection required specific theoretical lenses to describe how migrant students experience their affiliation with CAMP and how they formed their identity development and self-authorship in a predominately White institution

(PWI) academic environment. Highlighting the participants' quotes confirmed the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015). The participants' quotes ensured that the study's findings, interpretations, and data were discernable (Patton, 2015). Additionally, the migrant students disclosed their experiences, memories, and feelings and shared their voices about pursuing a college education at a predominately White institution. The participants' quotes established and demonstrated trustworthiness to assist with validity (Patton, 2015).

The study's focus was to understand the migrant students' experience with academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals. The research findings analyzed each participant's interview and presented their quote through the participants' lens on how they made meaning to their experiences. The researcher used Kaltura, a video cloud platform, to transcribe the participants' interviews. Furthermore, the researcher manually edited each transcript to ensure the accuracy of the participants' interviews.

Following Saldaña's (2016) approach, the data analysis procedure included listening to the transcripts, taking notes, identifying codes, highlighting words, and capturing specific phrases to make meaning of their experiences. The six elements of the Labovian model approach were instrumental in analyzing the transcripts and structuring the participants' stories (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, the six elements of the Labovian model analyzed each participant's narrative to understand their pre-college and CAMP experiences and comprehend how these experiences shaped their identities (see Table 1). Each transcript was categorized into clauses and classified

into one of the Labovian model's six elements that are: (1) abstract; (2) orientation; (3) complicating action; (4) evaluation; (5) resolution; and (6) coda (Saldaña, 2016).

Although the study focused on the barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals, several subthemes emerged. The significant subthemes that emerged from the data analysis process are discussed throughout the findings. Table 3 illustrates the barriers and subtheme findings from the research.

### **Disruption of Frequent Moves**

The disruption of frequent moves, relocating from other states to Georgia, and moving to Georgia from other countries were significant factors in the participants' self-definition and self-authorship growth. Each participant had a different primary, middle, and secondary educational experience. The participants constructed these experiences and meaning-making essential to developing their identity and self-authorship. The subtheme that emerged from the barrier due to the disruption of frequent moves were language barriers, attending predominately White schools, cultural differences, not fitting in, and microaggressions. For instance, two participants shared similar experiences with the disruption of frequent moves and continuous change in schools. Lydia and Nevil disclosed how the frequent moves were challenging. Nevil remembered "moving at least nine times." Lydia remembered transferring to four different schools and shared her challenges with constantly changing schools.

Further, Lydia noted that moving to different counties within Georgia and transferring to new schools was "difficult." She explained, "I had taken some high

school courses in eighth grade, and when I transferred to the new high school, I lost all my credits.” As a result of the frequent moves, Lydia fell behind in classes:

During eighth grade going into the ninth-grade year, we moved from one county to another county. I probably went to four different schools from elementary through high school. I moved a lot between those years, but it was all within the same state. So, we never went out of the state of Georgia. We always stayed here in Georgia. Sometimes depending on the milk industry, we moved to a different county because it was a better opportunity for my dad. Or he got offered more money to work on another dairy farm. So, it was mostly my dad just taking care of us, and we had to move where it was better for him to work.

Nevil indicated how he dreaded the notion of moving and starting a new school. He further mentioned that “I couldn’t make friends because we kept moving around.” He repeatedly adjusted to a new environment until he finally settled into high school:

I felt fear every first day of school except for my junior and senior years of high school. Fear of not succeeding and fear that I wouldn’t be accepted. Fear of not making friends, fear of failure, all the fears I could think of I had.

Lydia and Nevil’s disruption of frequent moves had a negative impact emotionally and socially while impeding their academic studies. They did not have the educational foundation and stability due to their family’s financial circumstances.

### **Language Barrier**

All the participants knew another language or had family members who spoke another language. For some participants, the language barrier had a negative effect and hindered their academic success. They struggled to communicate with teachers

and complete assignments effectively. Participants expressed their feelings of embarrassment and frustration about starting a new school.

Moving from another country and not having the ability to speak English was challenging for Daisy, Griselda, Nevil, and Scott. They moved to the U.S. not knowing how to speak English and had challenging experiences due to the language barrier. Although Scott grew up in the U.S., his primary language was Spanish, and he had limited English skills. Each participant experienced difficulties acclimating academically due to language barriers.

Daisy moved to the U.S. in 2012 from Myanmar, Southeast Asia. In her first year in the U.S., Daisy started her education in middle school and enrolled in the eighth grade, and “I didn’t know how to speak English, so they push me back a grade.” Daisy’s first language is Karen. Because she did not speak English, the school administrators immediately moved her out of the eighth grade and placed her in the seventh grade. Due to her language barrier, Daisy’s school held her back a grade level to assist with her English skills. “I would say the language and accent have made it difficult for me to participate in class discussions.” The language barrier was prevalent throughout Daisy’s undergraduate studies:

I have a soft voice and a strong accent, and my teachers and professors struggled to understand my English. Other students were fluent in English and could participate in the class discussions. I also had trouble understanding what they said because I did not understand some of the words’ definitions or know what they meant. I had to think about what it meant in my language and then translate it back to English. It was a difficult process.



Griselda arrived in the U.S. in 2014 from El Salvador when she was 16. Her first language is Spanish, and “I didn’t know how to speak English when I came to the U.S. and felt I was too old to start high school.” Due to the lack of English proficiency, Griselda experienced difficulty comprehending lessons and communicating effectively in her new high school environment:

I did not want to attend high school because I felt different and didn’t want to talk to anybody. I was frustrated because I didn’t understand or could communicate with other students. I went to the classes and didn’t understand English or what they were saying. It was hard not to know anything. I thought to myself, how I am supposed to pass these classes and get good grades if I don’t understand? So, I stopped going to Johnson High School after two years because they didn’t give me the support to learn English.

Griselda described attending high school as a “frustrating” experience. She divulged that the high school did not evaluate her English skills and was unaware of her lack of English. Nevil moved to the U.S. in 2006 when he was eight. When he arrived in the U.S., he did not know how to speak English and he explained “My language barrier was huge, especially during the first couple of years of moving to the United States.” Moving to the U.S. was not an easy transition for Nevil. He recounted his feelings of embarrassment when he first started attending the third grade in the U.S.:

Academically, I did not know anything here. There’s no such thing as English classes in Guatemala, so the language barrier was definitely hard. You know? My first year was tough because I failed the third grade and had to take summer

classes. It was embarrassing for me. So academically, it was pretty harsh. I took it personally that I had to take summer classes.

Nevil also added that he “knew the negative experience of starting a new school would result in being treated differently because of the language barrier.”

Scott moved three times while he was in elementary school. However, he did attend one high school. Moving and starting a new school was always a challenge for Scott. While growing up, everyone in Scott’s family only knew how to speak Spanish and did not know how to speak English, “It was tough from kindergarten to high school because I didn’t do well in English.” Scott recollected how difficult it was to attend school with limited English proficiency. He revealed that attending school was “tough” because of his inability to speak English:

To be honest, it was tough. It was really tough, especially in high school. I was in the first grade in Texas before we moved to Georgia. When we first moved to Georgia, there were not a lot of Spanish-speaking people in my community.

There was not a lot of help because my native language is Spanish. I didn’t grow up learning English. My parents and everyone in my household spoke Spanish. I didn’t start learning English fully until probably the fourth grade. So, it was tough because there were many words I didn’t understand in English.

It was challenging for Scott to start new schools and not understand English. The language barrier also made it difficult for him to do well in his English classes while in high school. The participants communicated how language barriers contributed to emotional setbacks and academic performance and prevented them from showing their full potential as students. The lack of English proficiency also affected the participants’

self-esteem and their learning process at different educational grade levels, from kindergarten through high school.

### **Predominately White Schools**

Ashley, Gilbert, Jeff, Lydia, Nevil, and Scott attended a predominately White primary, middle, and secondary schools. Participants described various experiences attending a predominately White school. In particular, two participants articulated their experiences transferring from an out-of-state school to a predominately White school in Georgia. Jeff and Scott had a surprising cultural transformation when they transferred to a predominately White school. They recalled their experiences attending a predominately White school as “astonished” and “confused.”

Jeff and his family moved to Gainesville, Georgia, from Chicago, Illinois, during his first year of high school. Jeff elaborated on his first day attending high school in Georgia as “astonished.” He was surprised by the lack of diversity in his new high school and how different the students were from the schools in Chicago:

On the first day of class, I was astonished to see how limited the diversity was. I remember one classmate in my English class telling me she was the only Hispanic student in that class until I got there. She was like, oh, wow, like there’s another Hispanic now, that’s good. Yeah, in terms of diversity, I felt comfortable being in my English class with somebody I could identify with. Everywhere I looked there were White people. I did feel out of place just because, you know, Chicago is very diverse.

Jeff detailed how transitioning to a new predominately White high school “is

a different world and culture.” Nevertheless, Jeff’s transition to a predominately White high school was positive. His educational environment in IL was a significant factor in diminishing and reducing any biases.

Overall, Jeff acclimated to his new high school in Georgia. He was “proud” to serve as the news anchor for his high school. He further mentioned, “When other people saw my face, they didn’t see a White face...they saw my face.” He continued:

I’m glad that I attended a new high school that was predominately White. The emotion to describe how I felt attending a predominately White high school, specifically, would be proud. I say that because from my sophomore until my senior year, I was the news anchor man in my high school. Being the news anchor was related to my major. So, I was a news anchor in high school for three years, and everybody saw my face as a news anchor, right? I was proud of that, you know, to be a minority and represent a minority group in the school.

Jeff’s new high school setting was different from the diverse inner schools he once attended. Nevertheless, Jeff found an outlet to fit in with his new high school.

On the contrary, Scott had a different experience, as he could not connect to his new educational environment and could not adjust academically. However, for Scott, the cultural shift was more challenging. Additionally, Scott recounted how he “felt confused” when they moved to Georgia and started attending the first grade in a predominately White school district. While living in Texas, they lived in a diverse lumber community. His previous schools were not predominately White, which was a unique experience and adjustment. He experienced a “cultural shock” when he started attending his new school in Georgia:

I felt confused when I first started school in Georgia. You know this is the south, and at that time, it was a predominantly White school. You didn't have many people who spoke the same language as Spanish. You didn't have anything familiar with what you knew around you. You couldn't communicate correctly, and the people were either African American or White, one of the two.

Scott highlighted high school was also challenging because it was predominately White and due to his language barrier. He expressed how "it was more like a do-or-die situation to finish high school." Nevertheless, he took on the challenge of completing his high school education:

I had to accept the challenge of attending high school no matter what. For one, I knew I wanted to finish high school. So, it was like a challenge that I had to accept. I told myself, you get better at this, or you are not going to finish this.

Transitioning to a predominantly White school served as a cultural shift for Jeff and Scott. Unlike Scott, Jeff was connected to his new educational environment and performed well academically.

### **Cultural Differences**

Understanding the norms and traditions of a new country could be challenging. The cultural differences in the educational environment were adjustments for Daisy, Griselda, and Nevil. The participants explored their cultural background, described their native country, and compared these experiences to transitioning to the U.S. educational system. The participants were able to chart their academic journey as well as understand how it shaped their identities and developed their growth towards self-authorship. The participants described their cultural differences in the school environment. The pace of

transition varied for each participant. For example, Griselda recalled her cultural adjustment as being “hard.” Mainly she had a difficult time acclimating to her high school, “I feel that Johnson high school did not give me the support I needed to learn English, and I was failing... it was a difficult two-year experience of not learning.” Griselda did not feel connected in her new environment, resulting in frustration and academic disruption.

Daisy characterized her cultural differences in attending schools in Georgia as a “journey” because she was from a different ethnicity. She explained, “I was the only different student in the entire school,” and “When I first started attending school in the U.S., I felt intimidated. I felt in the new schools that I was squished into a diverse population.” Daisy labeled this feeling of integrating with diverse groups as “squish,” or “I was being squished into so many diverse groups.” She elaborated:

It is challenging to be in class because I have a different cultural experience.

When I was going to school in another country, it was different. You know? In my culture, students had to be quiet and listen, or else teachers used some harsh punishment to discipline students. In this country, students can speak up. I struggled to participate in classes because I do not know how to speak up, and my classmates do speak up.

Despite the cultural difference in high school, Daisy found teachers in the U.S., to be supportive of her education. She mentioned “Teachers were helpful, but it is a different culture. The teachers’ support really gave me an eye opener and adjusted to the education system in the U.S.”

Nevil emphasized that he “did not know anything” when he arrived in the U.S. “My whole world was in Guatemala with my grandma.” Moving from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar environment was emotionally impactful for Nevil and led to emotions of uncertainty and confusion. He explained that “Teachers couldn’t recognize that I was different or accept me for who I was.”

It was a complex experience to start a new school for Daisy, Griselda, and Nevil. The participants’ struggles with cultural differences resulted from various circumstances, such as exposure to diverse groups, attending a predominately White school, frequent moves, and language barriers. Each participant’s past cultural experiences contributed to how they navigated and managed the cultural expectations of their new educational setting. Although their educational journey in the U.S. was challenging with integrating and adjusting to their new environment, these participants desired to continue their education.

### **Not Fitting In**

The participants’ stories highlighted the process of making meaning of their experience and their identity of self-establishment. Participants had diverse experiences fitting in with peers during their primary, middle, and secondary education. Some participants were unable to connect with fellow peers due to frequent moves, starting new schools, language barriers, cultural differences, or not identifying with their own culture. Ashley, Gilbert, Lydia, and Nevil attended predominately White schools from elementary to high school and had challenges fitting in with Latinx peers. Daisy and Griselda stated they also had issues with fitting in due to their limited English skills and cultural differences.

For instance, Ashley had difficulties fitting in and understanding her self-identity in high school, “I didn’t know how I fit in or identify who I was.” Ashley felt curious about her identity and defining herself as a person as “There were other Hispanic students in my school, but I didn’t converse with them because I was an honor student and in AP classes.” Furthermore, the “Hispanic students thought I was different because I was always around White students and was in classrooms other than theirs.” Ashley did not understand why she was being treated differently by her peers, “I didn’t know how to handle that stuff, which affected me and my identity.”

Moreover, Gilbert had a similar experience of not fitting in during high school. Gilbert divulged he did not feel as though he belonged in high school. Gilbert “grew up knowing more White students because there weren’t many Hispanics in my honors classes.” He explained:

I was the only Hispanic student in the honors classes with the same White students all 12 years of school. Honestly, I grew up knowing that I didn’t fit in. I don’t feel like anyone who was part of my high school experience motivated me to attend school. I was failing all my classes in my senior year. I didn’t like my school and didn’t feel like I fit in.

Gilbert expressed his anguish that not fitting in was setting him up for failure, and he desired a way out to feel a sense of belonging. Nonetheless, Lydia was bullied and teased by female students, making her feel socially isolated and often disconnected, “A lot of the Hispanic girls did not like me in high school...they always picked fights with me, or they wanted to say stuff to me that was rude.” She elaborated:



First, I never fit in anywhere because the schools I attended were predominantly White. So, when I started a new school, I was like, I'm just going to have to fit in. Then in ninth grade, it wasn't easy. I didn't want to eat lunch or be in the lunchroom with other students. I wasn't talking to anybody. I was really shy. I felt embarrassed asking for help with my locker. I thought that I was usually an outgoing person. But when you move, it's tough because you don't know anybody. I wanted to talk to people, but it was scary, I was a ninth grader, and it was my first year in high school. It was really hard for me to ask for help or talk to anyone.

Lydia shared that she tried to "fit in" with her peers. She detailed her experiences with being bullied in high school, "A group of Hispanic students was against me for some reason." The bullying and teasing made her feel a sense of loneliness. Nevil lived in predominately White communities and often felt isolated and not accepted. Nevil conveyed his fears with the obstacles of not being fluent in English, his academic barriers due to the disruptions of constant moves, and his low social-economic status:

It was a huge fear to move constantly and not make friends. I didn't have any friends because they couldn't relate to my hardships or ethnicity. I remember getting close to some Hispanic friends but still felt isolated. Even though we shared similar backgrounds and spoke the same language, I couldn't identify with them and vice versa because I kept moving around so much.

For Daisy, not fitting in school was tied to her cultural differences. Making new friends in school was a challenge for Daisy. She described herself as a "person who stays low-key" and, at times, "it is not easy to understand other people's differences and

perspectives.” Daisy also attributed her lack of connection with peers to her language barrier. Not being fluent in English prevented her from being able to communicate effectively with others, and “This experience always made me realize that I am different from these students...we’re not the same.”

Griselda recounted how students teased her about her accent and how she wanted to drop out of high school because she did not fit in:

Other students made fun of me because I had a thick accent. Even the Hispanic kids, instead of helping me, teased me about my accent and made fun of the way I talked. I got to the point of pretending I didn’t care that they made fun of me, but in reality, I just wanted it to stop. I just wanted to stop going to school. My accent bothered me a lot back then.

Not being able to fit in was prevalent among the participants. Each participant deeply conveyed their emotions. Ashley was curious about her identity and questioned why she didn’t fit in with her peers. Gilbert felt he did not belong, and Lydia felt lonely. Lastly, Daisy felt the cultural differences were challenging to fit in, and Griselda wanted to drop out of school.

### **Microaggressions**

Ashley, Gilbert, and Nevil revealed experiencing some negative actions, indignities, and invalidations while in their primary and secondary education. Ashley and Gilbert also experienced demeaning behavior in their postsecondary education environment. The participants articulated incidents in which someone or a group made offensive statements. In some occurrences, the participants were unclear if the discriminatory behaviors may have been accidental or purposeful. Regardless, the

participants were emotionally affected by these experiences and were subject to their ethnicity and association with being migrant students.

Ashley shared an experience where she felt discriminated against in high school. These experiences made her feel “awful,” “ashamed,” and “angry for not speaking up.” During a high school football game with a predominately Latinx high school, Daisy’s high school publicly targeted and shouted derogatory and racist remarks. She continued to say:

The people from my high school chanted over and over, *build that wall, build that wall*. Adults, maybe parents and students from my high school wearing Donald Trump t-shirts and hats with the slogan *Make America Great Again* were chanting. They were way too much, and it was terrible.

The discriminatory experience created many emotions for Ashley that made her question her identity, “I couldn’t believe people could act this way and treat those students like they were inferior.” She explained that “I’m a Mexican American female and didn’t understand why people hated my people.” Ashley also had a negative experience with an advisor while in college, “I had a terrible encounter with my new UNG Advisor.” At first, Ashley felt the Advisor was being “rude.” Then she realized the Advisor was “condescending” toward her. The engagement of her conversation made her question if she was experiencing some subtle form of discrimination or “microaggressions.” The negative and condescending encounter with the Advisor made Ashley feel terrible and inadequate. She detailed her feelings and said, “I think the Advisor talked to me this way because I am Hispanic.” As she continued explaining:

My Advisor continued to comment that nobody would care about my undergraduate accomplishment and activities. He rudely told me that when the Graduate Admissions Office opened my application, this information would not be significant. He proceeded to tell me that *it is not as you are applying to Ivy League schools like Harvard or Yale.*

Gilbert had experienced high school teachers not being supportive of his academic endeavors. He had negative interactions and classroom engagements with teachers, “I don’t feel like I got a good education, teachers talked down to me, and I questioned things that happened to me during those years in school.” Gilbert did not receive the timely educational support services and assistance to enroll in the Dual Enrollment program. As he recollected these memories, he sounded disappointed that he did not get guidance when he was seeking to apply to the Dual Enrollment program. “Many of my teachers discouraged me from enrolling in the Dual Enrollment Program.” Further, he described one teacher who would patronize him in front of the class, and “I felt he treated me this way because it had to do with my race... I honestly believe it is racist or just pure racism.” Gilbert remembered how these daily interactions with his teachers caused him a lot of social anxiety in high school as “I felt despondent because of the way he treated me.”

Gilbert also had negative encounters during his first year in college. He illustrated his negative experiences at the student gym and on one occasion when the migrant students were celebrating an on-campus event:

Sometimes I would be alone at the gym, and one of the same employees there would come out, and the employee would stand by me while we were working

out. He would slowly inch closer and closer to us. He would do this every week. Being watched and stared at while working out was a weird feeling. I felt this employee was watching me because he thought I might steal the equipment.

Another negative experience Gilbert recalled was the “I Stand with Immigrants Day” event on campus. He disclosed how an individual in charge of the campus cafeteria aggressively approached the migrant students yelling and asking about the event. He explained:

These situations made me feel judged for being a migrant student. I don’t understand why people judge us. Honestly, people don’t know me or my background or anything. I don’t know what caused this individual to feel the need and ability to speak down to me or us in this way.

Nevil was in third grade when he first encountered discrimination, “I was a third-grader and didn’t know much about discrimination or prejudices.” His ethnicity and language barrier were significant factors in feeling a sense of discrimination, “I did not learn English, and in Guatemala, they do not teach English classes to third graders.” Unfortunately, as a third-grade student, Nevil felt that not knowing English and repeating the same grade was his fault. He noted, “I didn’t know at the time I was being discriminated against because I did not know English, and my school was predominately White.”

Out of the eight participants, Ashley and Gilbert disclosed that they experienced some microaggressions in the PWI environment. Most of the microaggressions encounters and experiences of slight and racist actions were in their primary and secondary education. Reflecting on these discriminatory experiences

caused the participants to relive painful memories as they described how they felt “judged” or treated “harshly.” As they navigated through these circumstances, they discovered how to cope and manage their emotions, establishing their identity.

### **Inadequate Preparation**

The participants described their educational setbacks and feelings of academic failure. The constant moves contributed to the unstable foundation of Lydia’s education. Her family’s high mobility rate resulted in Lydia losing high school credits. The relocation to the U.S. and not knowing how to speak English resulted in Daisy repeating the seventh grade, Nevil repeating the third grade, and Griselda inadequately prepared for high school.

For instance, the age-grade difference and lack of English proficiency contributed to Griselda dropping out of high school. Griselda did not feel adequately prepared academically and resorted to dropping out of high school due to the language barrier. As a result, Griselda resorted to seeking work in the poultry plant to pay her proprietary school tuition to learn English. “I worked hard in the poultry plant and saved money to pay for my school and help my parents financially.”

Lydia noted that the constant moves were challenging academically. She remembered “It was very difficult to lose my credits because I did not want to fall behind.” In addition, she shared how her new high school’s migrant program provided her with a tutor. “The other students in my new high school were ahead of me, so I needed extra help.” She often felt uncomfortable that her high school assigned a tutor. Lydia did not like having a tutor and pulled out of classes for tutoring. She elaborated, “other students would think I was stupid because I needed extra help.”

Furthermore, failing the third grade made Nevil feel a sense of academic failure and “I took it personally that I had to take summer classes.” He blamed himself and said, “I felt like it was my issue, not the school’s or my parents’ issue.” In retrospect, Nevil now realized he needed help learning English, but the school administrators and teacher did not provide assistance.

Scott was the only participant who shared his challenges of being inadequately prepared for college and taking remedial classes during his first year. Even though Scott noted he realized it was beneficial to be in remedial classes to prepare him to get to a college level. However, he expressed that taking these remedial courses delayed his graduation, which was “challenging.” He continued to say:

All my classes in the fall, spring, and summer semesters were remedial classes, which was challenging for me. Every semester, three of the four classes I had registered for were remedial, which put me back with my graduation. I saw the benefit of being in remedial classes, but I know why people thought these were a waste of time. Being in remedial classes doesn’t count towards your GPA or graduation—nothing like that.

It was essential for Scott to take remedial classes to get to the college level. At first, he felt conflicted that he was not at a college level, but then he had to resolve within himself that the remedial classes were to prepare him. Taking the remedial courses often dissuaded him, but Scott understood these courses were required to succeed. Scott expressed that knowing the significance of these courses was critical because he “would have probably withdrawn from school.” However, Scott kept moving forward and taking the required remedial courses to reach college-level classes.

Although these participants had academic challenges during their primary, middle, and secondary education or their first year of college, most enrolled in AP or Honor classes or the Dual Enrollment program (see Table 2).

### **Middle and Secondary Education Support**

Educational support was a principal aspect in enhancing the participants' identity development and self-authorship. Ashley, Daisy, and Nevil received educational support from their schoolteachers. Jeff and Scott credited their counselors for providing them with the academic guidance and incentive to pursue a college education. Lydia received one-to-one tutoring through the Migrant Education Program (MEP). The support from teachers or counselors provided the foundation for the participants' to achieve secondary education success and pursue higher education. The support of the MEP prepared Lydia with related educational material and guidance to complete high school.

Ashley regarded her high school and education experience as "decent" due to the support of her teachers:

I was fortunate to have a pretty decent high school experience. Some of my teachers cared about my education. I was in honor classes and in AP classes in high school. I was one of the lucky ones to take honors and AP classes. To be an honor student wasn't bad. Although the representation of my peers in my classes was predominately White, I felt good about my high school education.

Daisy reminisced about how her English teacher was very involved with different ethnic groups and how he was friendly. Moreover, Daisy recalled how he would go out of his way to help and guide her with classes. She felt comfortable going to him for help and noted, "It was nice to have someone like him helping me since I didn't have many



friends in high school, so having a teacher interested in supporting diverse groups made it easier for me.” Daisy also had a math teacher interested in helping her with her postsecondary educational goals.

Nevil had a similar experience with receiving support from his high school teachers. He recognized two teachers that served as his mentors and made his high school experience successful:

I was fortunate enough to have a couple of mentors. My high school instructor inspired me and motivated me to do well. He is from Puerto Rico and speaks Spanish. I looked up to him because he was a teacher and had achieved a high rank in the military. He was a Hispanic man and a professional. I also had a literature teacher who helped me a lot. She understood I was making an effort in class and recognized my limited grammar due to my language barrier. She would stay after school or come in early to answer any of my questions.

These teachers gave Nevil the motivation and support he needed in high school to succeed. He resonated with how he was “fortunate to have them around.” Jeff conveyed how his guidance counselor was instrumental in his participation in the Dual Enrollment program, which allowed him to earn college credits while still attending high school. During Jeff’s senior year of high school, his guidance counselor helped him enroll in the Dual Enrollment program. “He told me which college courses to take while in high school, and his help was very beneficial for me.” Jeff described how taking college-level classes as a high school student helped him “tremendously.” He continued to say:

I’d say it was my guidance counselor at the time that made my high school experience successful. My guidance counselor went above and beyond to help

me. I've heard about other guidance counselors my peers had, and I compared how they supported them and the efforts they put into helping their students. My guidance counselor was drastically helpful in terms of like efforts, like higher.

Being in the Dual Enrollment program and taking college-level courses has helped Jeff in his undergraduate program. Jeff remembered how his guidance counselor assisted him with college applications and CAMP. Scott had a similar experience with his high school guidance counselor. He expounded his high school counselor was instrumental in guiding him to pursue his college education, "My high school counselor was always pushing us to move forward." Scott elaborated how his counselor was the one who helped him while in high school and "She inspired me to apply to colleges." He further explained how his counselor advocated for minority students to attend college. Scott noted how his counselor would inform him about college fairs and tell him to attend college recruiting events. Additionally, despite his limited English proficiency, Scott credited his guidance counselor for advising him to enroll in AP Spanish classes:

Mainly, I guess you could say I don't like to read, and it was hard for me to understand English. I did well in my Spanish classes in high school and my guidance counselor helped me enroll in Spanish AP classes. I had more advanced Spanish AP classes than English classes.

Further, Lydia received academic support from her high school through the MEP Program to assist her in catching up with her grade level:

My new high school assigned me to a tutor through the Migrant Education Program (MEP). The tutor would get me from the classroom. The MEP tutor

would bring me books; if I needed them and give me resources like websites to work on. The tutor also talked to me about anything happening at school.

By exploring their educational interests, each participant understood their self-motivation and how they took the initiative to pursue their educational goals. The support also helped the participants develop and strengthen their academic skills to complete high school.

### **Financial Hardships**

The majority of the participants disclosed they were from migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families. Table 4 presents the participants' disclosed parents' brief demographic and profiles. Gilbert divulged that his mother was a special education teacher, and his father worked as a mechanic at the local poultry plant. Ashley, Lydia, and Nevil shared how their fathers were the sole providers in their family. Daisy conveyed that both her parents work "hard" in the poultry industry. Moreover, Daisy's parents did not allow her to work because her parents wanted her to focus on her studies.

Ashley said her father "Is the only one working in our family," and "We live pretty decently...it's not grandeur or spectacular, but my parents can provide for my siblings and me." Lydia's father constantly moved for work, and her mother did not work while she was young. Lydia described how her father was the sole provider and supported the family, "We had to move where it was better for him to work."

On the contrary, Griselda and Nevil had different experiences in which they assisted their families financially. After dropping out of high school, Griselda worked in the poultry plant for six years to help her parents financially. "I worked in the poultry

plant and helped my parents with the finances.” Further, after graduating from high school, Nevil worked in a factory to financially help his family.

Nevil had experienced and disclosed his financial hardships as “High school was financially difficult for our family.” He remembered that:

The most significant struggles in high school were my family’s financial barriers and transportation. My father was never really around and always working. We had to depend on him for transportation. I avoided the feeling of my hardships by studying, reading books, and getting involved with as many school activities as possible.

Nevil financial hardship intensified when his parents divorced. Due to the divorce of his parents and the need to assist his mother financially, Nevil could not attend college after high school, “I had family issues, and my parents separated and got divorced.” His mother burdened him with the finances and relied on him for financial and emotional support. He mentioned:

Ultimately, things just kept getting financially worse after my parents divorced.

Things got hostile and crazy at home. So, I felt the need to stay at home and find a way to contribute financially to the household. I started working at a factory after I graduated from high school.

The financial need to contribute to the family’s necessities required Griselda and Nevil to work. Nevil expressed his increased sense of responsibility to provide for his family. Furthermore, Griselda and Nevil took time off from their educational pursuits to assist the family’s financial needs.

## **Legal Status**

As a result of discussing the financial hardships, the subtheme of legal status emerged. Ashley, Lydia, Griselda, and Nevil shared their experiences with their U.S. legal status and the uncertainty of pursuing their college education goals. Ashley recalls how her high school counselor inquired about her and her parents' legal status while assisting her with an application. The application required her parents' U.S. legal status and social security numbers. It was Ashley's initial encounter with learning about her parents' legal status in the U.S. that was pivotal:

My father always provided for us, and it was never an issue. I learned my father arrived in the U.S. illegally. He does not have legal status in the U.S., but he works hard to be in a better situation. I couldn't believe my parents were not legal and did not have a social security number, or they wouldn't tell me where I was actually born. I assume I was born in the U.S.

Not knowing the legal status in the U.S. was difficult for Ashley. Ashley described her emotions of disbelief, and she "didn't know what this meant for her to pursue college." She shared that asking her parents for their social security numbers to complete her college application was difficult.

Contrarily, Nevil was aware of his illegal status. He did not have legal documentation to work or apply for a learner's permit or driver's license until the last few weeks of attending his senior year in high school. He mentioned that "By the last two years in high school, I have started to realize and accept my fate: to work in the field, work as my dad, and have no future." He described his family situation:

My mother was also in the same situation as me and did not have legal documentation and no mode of transportation. The possibility of enrolling in an institution of higher education was out of reach. I was an honored student with limited friends and no legal status in the U.S. I tried to avoid my situation and feelings of numbness by focusing on my academics and joining ROTC.

Lydia's parents were not legal in the U.S. and did not have a driver's license. She was responsible for driving her parents and younger sibling. She expressed the challenges of being accountable for assisting her parents due to them not having legal authorization to work or having a driver's license in the U.S.:

I am responsible for driving my parents to run errands and take them to the grocery store. My family wouldn't let me stay at school for a long time because I had to help and drive them everywhere. They didn't understand that I couldn't study at home and I had to be at school to study.

Griselda's father's illegal authorization prevented him from visiting his family in El Salvador. Although she arrived in the U.S. legally, when her father came to the U.S., he did not have his permanent resident status, and she did not see him for many years. She explained:

My father came to the U.S. when I was young. At the time, he did not have legal documentation to live in the U.S. and could not travel to El Salvador. During that time, he also worked in agriculture and traveled for work. I did not see or know my father. After many years, he finally received his green card.

The uncertainty and feeling of doubt are examples of Ashley and Nevil were

unsure about their prospects after high school. Nevil worried about what would happen after graduating high school and what type of job he would have. He was unable to predict a future for himself. His alternative plan was to join the U.S. military if he did not get legal status. “The military was my backup plan in case I did not have other options.” Ashley expressed self-doubt about her legal status. She did not know how to handle or ask her parents about their legal status. Daisy questioned her future and postsecondary pursuits. Lydia felt the pressure of her parents’ illegal status and was responsible for their mode of transportation. The consequences of Griselda’s father not having permanent resident status in the U.S. resulted in him living away from his family. Her father did not raise Griselda, nor did she know her father. Lastly, Nevil was limited with choices until he received his legal status to reside in the U.S. Fortunately, Ashley confirmed she was born in the U.S. and is a U.S. citizen.

### **Lack of Exposure to College-Educated Individuals**

Seven participants were first-generation college students (see Table 2). Gilbert noted he is a second-generation college student. Gilbert shared that his mother had a master’s degree, and his father had an associate degree. While each participant’s higher educational journey was different, most had similarities regarding their parents’ understanding and guidance towards a college education. Most participants displayed an early interest and desire to attend college during middle or high school. Daisy decided to attend college soon after coming to the U.S. Her father attended school until the seventh grade, and her mother never went to school. Her grandparents on her mother’s side also did not have an education or attend school, “I am the first one from her mother’s side of the family to go to school and receive an education.” Griselda always

aspired to attend college, but she expounded how her parents depended on her help, “I always wanted to go to college, but it was hard for me because my parents didn’t go to school or college and didn’t understand how important it was for me to get a college degree.” Both Griselda’s parents had a limited education. Her mother went to school until the second grade, and her father never attended school.

Jeff articulated how his parents had a limited education. His parents could not attend school because they had to work to help their family financially. He proceeded to say that his parents “have no educational background,” and elaborated:

I would ask my parents here in there about their education. My father once answered me and said he went to school in Mexico and the highest level of education was the equivalent of the third grade. That’s like the highest grade he attended. My mother only went up to the second grade. My father explained that they lived in poverty in Mexico and, of course, had to help and provide for his siblings.

Jeff’s parents did not attend school past the third grade. His parents could not go to school and work. To help their family, they had to prioritize work over education. Due to their limited education, they do not understand the intricacies of attending higher education:

I have peers that are White, and they go to school. We do the same things and whatnot, but you can’t compare us because, for one, they are more than likely to have parents or family members that have an educational background. Having educated family members gives them mentorship and guidance. They can reach out to their family member and ask for help about college or their career if



needed. In my case, as a migrant student, as a first-generation American college student, I don't have that luxury.

Lydia disclosed her mother went to high school but did not graduate. She said, "My mom made it through high school but didn't graduate because she married my dad, and he went to school until the fifth grade." The journey into higher education was always on Lydia's horizon:

Since I was young, I have always wanted to go to college because I wanted to do better than what my parents did. It was my goal to get a degree in higher education. Even if I had to pay for it or take loans, I wanted to attend college.

Lydia stressed that being a college migrant student was difficult with her undergraduate studies. She summarized that she did not have anyone at home that understands or could help her with her education. She "struggled" with studying for exams, "Being a migrant student affects me, and I can't depend on anybody at home to help me with my college education." She mentioned:

I literally still don't know how to study correctly. Sometimes I study for one exam, and it works, and then I do it the same for the next exam, and it doesn't work. I'm still struggling with how to study, and it is difficult. I often feel it is because I did not have the education at home. I never had a good environment to do my work and class assignments.

Moreover, Lydia expressed her frustration with her parent's lack of understanding of her postsecondary education:

They didn't go to college and do not understand. But then I realize that's not their fault, and I can't put that on them for not being educated. It did make me upset

sometimes when I was angry and frustrated. I would ask myself, why am I in this position? A lot of my friends have parents that help with their resumes and stuff like that. I never had help from my parents. I always felt alone and that I have nobody.

When his parents left Guatemala, Nevil said, “They did not have an education.” His father never finished elementary school, and his mother only went to the fourth grade. Nonetheless, Nevil told how his mother recently received her General Educational Development (GED) through High School Equivalency Program (HEP). Finally, Scott also shared how his parents did not attend school past the fifth grade. Scott conveyed that his father started the fifth grade but did not complete it. However, his mother finished the fifth grade.

The participants shared what they experienced due to being the first in their family to pursue a college education. Irrespective of the lack of exposure to college-educated individuals, the participants displayed determination and a commitment to obtaining a college degree.

### **Communication Challenges**

While participants described their lack of exposure to college-educated individuals, the subtheme of family communication emerged. Most participants disclosed how they could not communicate their challenges or barriers with their parents. The participants felt they could not speak about challenges with their parents because they would not understand, and they were immigrants. Growing up, Gilbert, “learned never to say anything about things that happen because it may cause trouble.” Griselda did not tell anyone about the challenges of not knowing English, understanding the

teachers and lessons, or the teasing from peers, “I was not able to share my emotions or problems with my parents.” Her family support and communication were limited.

In Ashley’s home, communicating educational challenges or sharing challenging experiences was not the norm. She could not communicate her emotions with her parents or seek their advice or guidance as “In high school, I told my mom about my challenges, and she would hear me but did not say anything; she never gave me any advice.” Ashley shared how she suffered alone in high school and felt she had no one to hear her emotions and help with her mental health:

My parents would hear me out, but I would say that I dealt with things on my own during high school. They were physically there, but I had to rely on myself to deal with my emotions. I couldn’t rely on them for emotional support or advice. I didn’t speak up or tell them about my feelings, and I was very independent. I would bury my feelings and suffer alone. I wouldn’t say, mom, you know what happened that made me angry, or mom, I had a conversation with one of my friends, and I didn’t like her view and it made me angry.

In general, Ashley “feels children of immigrant parents tend to be very independent and suffer alone.” Ashley also said, “I did not want to bother my parents with the issues or situations I experienced in high school.” She voiced that “My mother would not know how to help me with my mental health or emotionally.”

Daisy expressed similar experiences with communicating with her parents. She did not want to burden them with her challenges:

I can’t talk to my parents about my concerns with college because they will not understand, and they have never been to school. So, I don’t talk about my

emotional stuff and concerns about school. My parents are migrants, and I do not want to bother them with any issues I have because they have worked hard enough for the family.

Lydia did not share the challenges she experienced in her school with her parents. She expressed how she did not want them to worry about her, “I wanted to make them proud, so I never wanted to do something wrong.” She continued:

I never told my parents anything about what went on in school because I didn’t want them to be worried about me. I was the first child, and I felt it was up to me to make sure that they could have a better life.

As the oldest sibling, Lydia could not express her feelings to her parents. The lack of communication added more stress to Lydia’s high school experience.

It was not until Nevil was in high school that he shared his challenges about arriving in the U.S., being separated from his grandmother, reuniting with his parents, not knowing English, and attending a new school. He had yearned to share these complex feelings with his parents:

We had a random conversation during dinner about my brothers, and at the same time, I took the opportunity to talk to my parents and tell them how I felt growing up. I told them you know that time that I failed the third grade, and instead of understanding me, you questioned why I failed the third grade. I told them they were harsh on me and tough on me. Basically, I let them know I was not playing at school or not putting any effort into learning.

Further, Scott did not discuss his challenges about school with his parents, and “I mostly shared what was going on with my siblings.” Scott recalled he discussed challenges that occurred in school among his four siblings:

Oh no. Honestly, we didn’t share challenges or problems with our parents. My siblings and I would discuss with each other. We would say, hey, have you ever felt this way, or have you ever encountered this stuff. Or has this ever happened to you? We would say things like that. My siblings and I went to the same middle school and high school. So, we kept it all within the four siblings or ourselves. My older sister is one year older than me and would tell me if she did or didn’t experience it.

When Scott and his siblings would share their challenges, they would support each other whenever they encountered a situation in school. Scott added how he would tell his younger sibling how to navigate the school system and inform them of the available resources.

### **Managing College and Family Obligations**

Another subtheme that emerged from the lack of exposure to college-educated individuals was how the participants managed college and family obligations. Managing college and family obligations created increased pressure on the participants. Ashley, Daisy, Griselda, Lydia, Nevil, and Scott contribute to the families’ needs while attending college. Their parents did not understand the responsibilities of being undergraduate students. They each described their challenges of living on campus, studying, participating in on-campus activities, or using the campus gym. The obligation of the eldest sibling was not easy for Ashley to manage college and home. She explained how

her parents were happy she was attaining a college degree but found it challenging with her mother. She noted how her father was supportive, but her mother had difficulties with her attending college. She mentioned:

My dad was happy I wanted to attend college, even though it was tough on my father and my mother that I left home to attend college. I helped my mother a lot at home with my younger siblings, so it was harder for her when I decided to leave off for college.

Ashley went home as often as possible to help her mother. Although Ashley was in her last semester of college and would receive her degree, she still found it “hard” to manage her family obligations. Daisy’s parents had difficulty understanding why she could not live at home while attending college, “I was the first in my family to attend college, and my parents did not understand that I had to live in college.” Griselda noted how she was the oldest daughter and responsible for helping the family:

When we came to this country, everything was different than what we knew in El Salvador. We came here, and my parents did not know English, and they did not know about the education system. They depend on me because I am the oldest and speak English.

For instance, Lydia conveyed her parents did not allow her to live on campus, which caused her difficulties when staying on campus to study or work out in the gym. Lydia’s parents gave her a curfew, and she had to be home to help her mother and sister:

When I started college, I wanted to live on campus, but my parents did not let me. I also wanted to exercise at school because they have a gym. I want to be healthy. I told my parents I was going to the gym, and they wanted me to be home at six

o'clock. I would leave the house and go to the gym, stay at school, study for a few hours, and attend my classes. If I went to the gym, I would get in trouble.

My parents did not want me to go to the gym or shower at the gym. They did not want me to study at school either because they needed me at home to help them.

Lydia voiced how her parents would tell her that there was "a desk at home to study and why don't you use it." She explained how her parents constantly fought with her about not being home, "They did not understand that I wanted to study at school instead of being at home helping them and helping my sister with homework." The oldest sibling's obligations of helping the family and managing college were very stressful for Lydia, "Basically, I was my little sister's mom. I attend her teacher meetings, help her with homework, and take her to her doctor and dentist appointments."

She eluded to "Even though I was already successful in high school, had an outstanding GPA, and had all these achievements, I struggled in my first year of college." Nevil divulged his struggles during his second semester in the CAMP program due to his family's financial upheavals. He continued to explain how he struggled:

In the second semester of the CAMP program, I started getting pressure from my family and siblings. Why are you not here helping us? We need you to be home. Hearing all these issues back home, I felt the responsibility and the need as an older sibling to go back and step up and do something about what was happening at the time.

Further, Scott had to enroll at UNG part-time to support and manage their family and work obligations. He explained:

It never crossed my mind about leaving school. It crossed my mind early on to go to school part-time, which is what I ended up doing regardless. I had to become a part-time student because of my job. Work was getting to me, and I had to support my family.

The participants' challenges were balancing college and family responsibilities while contributing to their families' needs or understanding the process of higher education. Managing these internal and external obligations was significant for the participants as first-generation college students. Each participant understood the sacrifice and commitment of pursuing college despite these challenges.

### **Attributes of Being a CAMP Student**

All participants described their CAMP experience as positive. Participants explored how CAMP provided multiple perspectives in pursuing their undergraduate degree, assisted with challenges, and acknowledged their cultural reality and personal choices. The CAMP program encouraged the participants to take ownership of themselves and their learning. The participants illuminated how CAMP assisted them in completing their first year of college and helped them acclimate to higher education. Participants disclosed how CAMP offered them a family environment and community of fitting in. They also delineated how CAMP provided them with academic and financial support and effective strategies for time management and living away from home. CAMP enabled them to persevere academically by encouraging participation in student organizations, developing leadership skills, serving as role models, and valuing educational support. Additionally, CAMP was instrumental in assisting migrant students during the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, participants emphasized how



they were proud of their educational endeavors and academic accomplishments. They also expressed how they wanted to make their parents proud of them. They continued to describe how they wanted to give back to the migrant community and raise awareness of migrant culture.

### **Family Environment and Community of Fitting In**

Ashley, Daisy, Gilbert, Jeff, and Lydia expressed choosing the CAMP program because they wanted a community, fitting in, family, a sense of belonging, and instant friendships. Ashley desired to gain an awareness of herself and her Mexican culture, “I desperately wanted to belong to a community where I fit in.” She elaborated:

CAMP taught me the value of being a migrant student, and I am proud of being a migrant. CAMP made me feel accepted and that I was in the right place. It gave me a community with similar experiences and made me feel like I had a community. I now had people who would accept me. It was a nice experience, and I loved life and looked forward to my education at UNG. CAMP is a home, a place you could call home.

Daisy described CAMP as her “extended family and “built-in family.” When she needed advice or someone to talk to about her stressful experiences, she would go and speak to the CAMP counselor. Daisy mentioned how she would always approach the CAMP counselor by saying, “Oh, I’m stressed about this ...” Sometimes, after talking to the CAMP counselor, Daisy would realize that it was okay and that she had the skills to handle the situation. She explained, “I would get more suggestions and resources from the CAMP counselor. Daisy also explained that “The CAMP staff understood my problems and stress; they are my extended family away from home.”

CAMP connected Gilbert to other students that had similar backgrounds, “CAMP gave me a community and what I didn’t have in all my years of schooling.” He expressed his content as a CAMP student and how he made friends, “I made many friends, befriended everyone in the program, and developed close ties with everyone in my cohort.” He continued to say:

I was the only Hispanic student in the honors classes with the same White students all 12 years of school. But, then I got accepted into the CAMP program and came to UNG and met a bunch of people that are like me, exactly like me, migrants. So, I finally made friends and got to know other students like me. I met people who have similar backgrounds to me and similar cultures. So that was fun.

Additionally, Jeff instantly made friends with other migrant students. Jeff said that with CAMP, “you start your first year of college with other migrant students enrolled in the program.” He explained:

Whenever you go to college, you have to go out and make connections and go out and make friends. CAMP was beneficial in me making friends in college. We were a cohort of about 30 students. So I already had 30 friends when I started college.

Lastly, Lydia revealed how she was finally “part of something.” She explained that “I met many people that look just like me that were in my same shoes, that they all just wanted to go to college and be successful.” She elaborated on her excitement:

I was really excited. Everyone at the CAMP orientation spoke a lot of Spanish and English. They had food and a presentation of who they were and what they

did in the program. They taught us who they were as people. I recognized that they all have the same background, making me feel like I was part of something for once.

The process of self-evolution and seeking a new environment of belonging was essential for the participants. The participants build a sense of connection with others and acceptance of their identity.

### **Academic Support**

Most participants expressed the benefits of CAMP academic support through mentorship, coach support, counseling, tutoring, assistance with course selections, mandatory study hours, writing labs, and assignments such as meeting with their professors or setting up mock interviews with the Career Center and internship opportunities. Each participant described a positive experience with the academic support they received. The support they received developed their social and emotional skills. Participants disclosed how they learned how to handle obstacles or challenges, which increased their academic success.

Griselda described how CAMP provided her with academic assistance, “The CAMP instructors assist me with my essays and tutor me with my math.” Ashley, Daisy, Gilbert, Griselda, and Lydia shared their positive experience with CAMP’s requirement to connect with their professors. Ashley communicated how CAMP taught her how to approach professors with her concerns when her classes were challenging, “It was a great experience establishing a relationship with the faculty.”

CAMP taught Daisy to build relationships and interact with her classmates. She learned to connect with her classmates to discuss the class assignments:

So, I did what the CAMP counselor told me to do, and I know all the professors I have right now, like I kind of talk to them. I can go to them anytime, and they would be able to recognize me because I am communicating with them. I have built good relationships with the professors.

Daisy also stated how CAMP helped her focus on her studies. “Having certain mandatory hours to read and work on my assignments boosts my focus on learning.” CAMP’s required weekly study hours were helpful for Daisy to allot time to work on her assignments and assist with completing her class work.

Additionally, Gilbert highlighted how the CAMP staff required him to meet with his professors was helpful:

CAMP required the students to meet with their professors. At the beginning of each semester, I would meet with my professors and introduce myself. I would tell them that I am a CAMP student in this program. After I took my midterms, I asked the professors if they could provide me with a midterm report required by the CAMP program stating if I did good or not.

The encouragement to interact with the professor helped Gilbert maintain a good rapport with his professors. Gilbert noted how “this assignment honestly did help, and it helped me a lot with being able to approach professors because I had a hard time doing that.”

Furthermore, CAMP scheduled mandatory CAMP cohort meetings to engage CAMP students. Lydia noted how “the cohort meetings are helpful, and I get a lot of information on stuff that is available at the university.” Daisy shared how she was also

active in the CAMP cohort meetings, “I love attending cohort meetings, and I get excited to participate in these meetings.” She elaborated:

I participated in the CAMP cohort meetings scheduled every Monday at noon.

The CAMP cohort meeting is for current and past CAMP student members.

CAMP has different speakers talk about majors and careers and discuss money management or time management. I like attending these cohort meetings because when you go to college, you all have different time schedules, and it taught me to manage my time with my classes.

Moreover, Lydia often shared her personal and academic challenges with the CAMP staff. The CAMP coach provided Lydia with an outline for starting a conversation with her parents. Also, the CAMP coach provided Lydia with effective communication strategies with her parents, “The CAMP coach was always there to give me an outline of how I could talk to my parents and always giving me new ways to approach them.”

On the same note, Nevil often sought the guidance of the CAMP coach to assist him with his emotions and family concerns:

The counseling and coaching services CAMP provided helped me understand how to handle my emotions and family situations. CAMP helped me not directly but indirectly by telling me, hey, you can do it... not only can you do it, but this is also how you can do it. They impacted my life personally and academically.

The participants’ stories were enlightening on CAMP’s academic support and requirements. However, as one of the original cohorts of the CAMP program, Scott stated that he did not know if he would be able to handle all of the program’s new

requirements, “CAMP has grown since I started and has gotten stricter.” He continued to say, “how the demands of mandatory study hours, meeting with peer mentors, and the option of internship opportunities for CAMP students also require many hours.” He expressed mixed emotions about these requirements and commented that “students may get overwhelmed or overworked.” He expounded how he often wonders “how a CAMP student could manage the demanding study hours and work a part-time job.” Scott was “fortunate not to have to fulfill all the CAMP requirements while a CAMP student.”

On the contrary, Lydia felt that the CAMP staff provided the necessary support for migrant students and were always there if they needed help. She mentioned:

I was born in a household with parents working in agriculture who didn't attend college. My parents couldn't be my educational mentors, so CAMP gave me mentorship. Also, any migrant student willing to work hard and get a college degree should be part of the CAMP program.

Finally, Gilbert and Nevil expressed the internship opportunities offered by CAMP were helpful, allowing them to get paid while gaining valuable experiences.

### **Financial Support**

All eight participants solidified that CAMP's financial benefits were instrumental in relieving the financial burden in their first year of college. In addition to financial assistance, CAMP offered supplemental assistance and scholarship opportunities. CAMP helped Jeff with supplemental funds to assist with his living expenses. “I was living alone and didn't have a job. Living on your own is expensive, and the Director helped me.” Even after completing the CAMP program, the CAMP staff informed Jeff of scholarship opportunities:

I don't have the option to ask my parents for financial help with my education, and CAMP helped me with my FAFSA and learning how to manage my finances.

CAMP also helps you even after you graduate from their program. They informed me of the various scholarship opportunities, and I applied for them.

Ashley disclosed how the financial support determined her decision to attend UNG, "The scholarship opportunity CAMP offered helped my decision to attend UNG."

She elaborated that:

Without financial aid and CAMP, I don't think I would've been able to attend college. The financial support CAMP offered in my first year of college was very helpful. My parents would not be able to afford college, and I would not have the opportunity to participate in college. Receiving the scholarship in the first year of college made a difference. CAMP financial support makes a difference and allows many migrant students to access college, as it did for me.

Daisy detailed the financial support from CAMP as impactful, or "The biggest impact, I would say, is financial support because I didn't have to make my parents worry about my tuition." She mentioned:

I didn't know how financial aid worked, what is FAFSA, or about college tuition. As a first-generation student and the first person to attend college in my family, CAMP helped me understand my finances a lot during the first semester in college and afterward. The camp staff provided me with emotional support and individual coaching. The advisors assist with my questions and help me meet deadlines with important documents. The CAMP Director was very involved with students and offered me help with financial concerns.

Moreover, Gilbert decided UNG was the best choice because “it was by far the cheapest place that I could afford to attend and because of the assistance of CAMP.” The financial assistance of CAMP also covered his tuition and housing in his first year of college. On the same note, Griselda also expressed how the tuition at UNG was affordable, “The tuition is also way cheaper at UNG, and the CAMP financial support helps.” CAMP gave Griselda an awareness of FAFSA and financial assistance she did not know was possible:

I didn’t even know what financial aid was, how to apply for financial aid or anything about financial assistance to help with college. The information CAMP gave me was very helpful because I didn’t know or have any idea about financial aid.

All the participants needed financial assistance to cover or offset their college tuition. CAMP’s financial support and UNG’s affordable tuition assisted in offsetting the financial burden for the participants and their families.

### **Effective Strategies for Time Management and Planning**

Participants described how CAMP provided them with strategies to overcome obstacles with time management and learning to become independent. CAMP offered Lydia and Gilbert strategies on how to balance social, personal, and academic activities. Lydia and Gilbert described how they did not have good time management during their first year of college. The challenges with their time management hindered their academic pursuits. Lydia had a difficult time managing her time between her family and academic responsibilities, “My family wouldn’t let me stay at school for a



long time...they didn't understand that I couldn't study at home." Lydia continued to say:

Making my daily schedule was pretty complicated because I didn't know how to manage my time. I had trouble learning how to schedule my daily activities. What time I should wake up and get ready to go to school. What time should I take a lunch break or what time should I study for this class or that class. My time management was very challenging, but I did overcome it with the help of CAMP.

With CAMP's help, Lydia expressed how she learned to organize and plan her time between different activities and family responsibilities. She explained how "No one has to tell me what to do now, and I am responsible for myself and know what I need to do." CAMP provided strategies to focus on her time between school and home. Gilbert had difficulties structuring his time to manage tasks, class schedules, and assignments to be a productive student. He described:

Managing my time was the biggest challenge. I didn't use a calendar my first semester and did not keep track of anything. All these schedules and assignments were all up in my head. I thought that's how it works, but it doesn't work out that way. My classes got more challenging, and I got more assignments. I was working the internship and started joining clubs. It got chaotic.

Gilbert discussed these challenges with the CAMP Director and CAMP peer mentors. They recommended he use a calendar or a planner to record daily activities and tasks. CAMP provided him with suggestions on determining which tasks needed to get done and which were priorities.

Learning how to live on his own and become independent during his first year of

college was challenging for Jeff, “It was a struggle learning how to live on my own.” Jeff highlighted that living alone and away from his family was a difficult adjustment. He had to “figure things out” and learn how to cook, keep track of his daily schedule and manage his time. He elaborated:

Of course, you are starting to learn how to become an independent student in college. Whether you live at home with your parents or on a college campus, you must learn how to do things independently as an undergraduate student. I had the opportunity to live on my own, and that was more independence on top of the independence that a college education requires. I moved out at the age of 18, and that is a pretty young age, I’d say. Now I’m 19 and still young, but the challenge was learning how to be independent.

Jeff detailed how the CAMP counselor provided him with time management and financial and budget management strategies to assist with learning how to live independently. In addition, Jeff explained CAMP encouraged him to get involved in campus activities and stay focused on academics. Jeff added there was still a lot to learn, and he often learned by “trial and error.” Jeff concluded that he eventually acclimated to living independently and managing his time efficiently.

### **Engaging in Student Organizations and Developing Leadership Skills**

Seven participants shared their active involvement in campus activities and student organizations. CAMP encouraged the participants to engage in campus activities, special interest groups, clubs, and organizations. The participants expressed their positive experiences outside of CAMP. Most participants participated in campus activities, student organizations, student interest clubs, fraternity or sorority, and religious

activities. The participants perceived their involvement outside CAMP enabled them to enhance their interests and focus on their collegiate careers and academic expectations. Scott noted that being active in various student clubs and organizations was essential or “It is important to be in these clubs because that is how I get to meet people and learn more about the things I like.” Nevil served as the Migrant Student Union (MSU) president and founded the first Latin Fraternity at UNG. Ashley also participated in campus activities and student organizations, which enabled her to be a leader as “I do not think other universities would have given me these opportunities.” Ashley credited the CAMP program for honing her leadership skills:

CAMP knew I had the potential to be a leader. Although I was involved in clubs and a member of the marching band in high school, I did not serve as a leader.

CAMP helped me establish myself as a leader. I became president of the Migrant Student Union and was involved with various committees. I am a member of the McNair Scholars Program. I worked with the UNG Admissions Office assisting with recruitment and was on the Diversity Committee. When the campus organizations had meetings to discuss the issues on diversity, I was present to ensure I voiced my opinions.

In addition, Daisy worked as a CAMP peer mentor throughout her four years of college, which gave her an insight into the value of the CAMP programs’ services. “It was an excellent experience and training to gain and build up my confidence and leadership skills in college.” She was also an active member of the Migrant Student Union. Gilbert stated how being a migrant student involved in other organizations and

with peers outside the CAMP program allows him to be an “advocate for migrant students.” He mentioned how:

Many wrong things can happen to migrant students, especially their families, like migrant workers. We tend to come from backgrounds of people who are deported or working in strenuous conditions. So, I want to do things and events with campus organizations to advocate for migrants.

Moreover, Jeff credited CAMP for encouraging him to join and engage in other organizations. He explained how:

CAMP encouraged their migrant students to get involved with student clubs and organizations. CAMP also required you to attend events at school. That was another thing other students did not do as they were not encouraged to attend events. Other students did not have a good experience, but since I was encouraged to go to events, I had a really good experience. I started this chapter here at UNG called the Society of Professional Journalists, and I’m an active member. I am also a brother of Lambda Theta Phi, Latin Fraternity, Inc., here at UNG. I’m an IME Becas scholarship recipient and a peer mentor for CAMP.

Lastly, Lydia’s involvement in student organizations and interactions with peers outside the CAMP no longer feels a sense of loneliness and now feels “brave.” She expressed:

When I was growing up, I felt lonely. I didn’t talk to anybody, and I didn’t know English. Now I can speak to anybody, and I am brave now. I can get involved in activities and search for my opportunities. I am a go-getter and can do what I want when I set my mind to do it.

Participants organized and led activities or clubs and were self-directed. Moreover, participants also developed a sense of purpose by honing their interests, actively engaging in their college environment, and developing their leadership skills.

### **Role Model and Valuing Educational Support**

Role models through the CAMP program were significant in the participants' personal growth. Participants experienced positive role modeling from the CAMP Director and CAMP staff. The support network provided by CAMP encouraged the participants to excel academically. The CAMP personnel inspired participants to succeed in the pursuit of their educational endeavors. Participants shared the many academic expectations they had to achieve and expressed how CAMP guided them through the process.

The positive influence from CAMP leaders gave them the incentive to persevere in their college journey. The CAMP Director, Recruiter, Retention Coordinator, Counselors, Coaches, and Peer Mentors were instrumental in Ashely's college success, "Fortunately, I had a great experience with CAMP during my first year of college and throughout college, and it helped me achieve my educational goals at UNG." Gilbert credited the CAMP Director as the individual who encouraged him to continue his education. He continued to say:

CAMP is a phenomenal program! I want to say how amazing the CAMP Director is, who passes on the baton to the next migrant student. Many students come to college without a support group, without people teaching them the do's and don'ts of college and how to study and ensure the student succeeds. The CAMP Director motivates me to finish college. When I worked directly under the CAMP

Director as his intern, he inspired and pushed me in the right direction. He helped me create a unity of people here. I joined a fraternity and now have a network of people I can fall back on at any moment. They pulled me out of the dump when COVID happened.

Further, Jeff shared how the CAMP staff helped him emotionally and allowed him to reflect on his college journey:

The CAMP counselor helped me as well on how to understand what I was experiencing and what I felt because college was a big change. So, I needed to understand and give myself time to sit back and reflect that I was taking a big step in my life. Attending college will determine what you'll do for the rest of your life. That's why it was important to sit down and reflect on what I was doing. So that was another way the CAMP counselor helped me.

Furthermore, the CAMP program impacted Lydia's academic goals to continue her undergraduate studies. Lydia expressed how CAMP was integral in assisting her academically and navigating the campus resources. She mentioned:

If it had not been for CAMP, I would probably have had bad grades in my first semester of college. UNG is a huge school, and I would get lost. I would be trying to figure out what to do or who could help me. I couldn't imagine coming to the school and not having that support system, but I did have it. So, being a migrant student isn't all that bad because no other people get the same support group I get or support system.

Nevil shared how he looks up to the Director and was grateful for the chance to be part of the CAMP program, "The CAMP Director and counselor were the ones that really

impacted my college career.” Lastly, Ashley credited CAMP and UNG for having the opportunity to learn about Mexican history:

My high school was predominantly White, traditional, and conservative. I did not know about my Mexican culture and history until I started attending UNG. When I began attending UNG, I gained vital knowledge about my culture. My literature classes introduced me to Chicano literature, and student clubs taught me about Mexican history, values, ideas, and beliefs. I was in culture shock to learn about my roots. UNG brought back my identity as a Mexican-American.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Support**

Gilbert and Scott shared how the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging and how the CAMP program provided academic and emotional support during the pandemic.

Gilbert became depressed during the pandemic. Quarantining was very difficult emotionally and academically for Gilbert, “Quarantining at my house, I went through a severe phase of depression... I slept all day and night and failed every class.” Gilbert failed all his classes, and “I had to request a hardship withdrawal because I failed every class.”

Gilbert recounted how it took him longer to complete his associate degree due to the COVID-19 pandemic because “COVID messed everything up and delayed my education by a year.” There was a time when Gilbert felt that he should leave college:

I was watching the news and reading social media about how drastic COVID was. Then UNG sent the students home during my second semester in college. While living at home, my family wouldn’t let me go out because they feared COVID. My parents were taking the pandemic seriously. I was also scared of COVID. I

didn't go out and was in big panic mode. I felt the world was ending. I was afraid and spent a couple of months inside my house without leaving.

Gilbert expressed his emotional challenges about the pandemic to the CAMP staff. CAMP provided support and assistance for Gilbert to continue with classes. Gilbert communicated how he met with the CAMP staff in his second semester in the CAMP program and told them about his emotional experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. He also informed CAMP how he failed his classes. Gilbert explained that CAMP gave him another opportunity to stay in the CAMP program, "They're the ones that called me when I was failing and motivated me to get back into school." He continued to say, "CAMP was a lifesaver for me, and I appreciate their support." Gilbert expressed how it was the only time he felt college was challenging, "I think it had to do with many outside factors like the pandemic."

The COVID-19 pandemic changed Scott's trajectory toward graduation. Scott voiced that the pandemic caused him to change his class schedule. "I had to drop two classes and register for only one class when COVID started." It was a difficult decision for Scott to register for one course. He continued to explain:

My coursework was good until COVID-19. I thought in August 2020, I could register for three courses, but it was not permissible. It was a tough decision to drop from three classes to one class. Dropping my courses made it longer for me to graduate.

Scott illustrated how the CAMP program provided support during the pandemic. The CAMP staff checked how CAMP students and alums were doing and whether they needed help or food. He continued by saying:



During COVID-19, as an alumnus, CAMP provided several Zoom sessions to discuss the pandemic and whatnot. Most of their Zoom session was for the current CAMP students. CAMP had Zoom group sessions to encourage migrant students. It was nice that the CAMP staff engaged the CAMP alumni in these Zoom group sessions and sent their current student participants a care package to their apartments.

Although Gilbert and Scott expressed how the pandemic set them back with graduation, they both credit CAMP for supporting and encouraging them to continue their education.

### **Pride**

Participants valued their parents and the sacrifice to provide for their families. For some participants, it was essential to recognize their parents' support and how they wanted to make them proud. Griselda decided to attend college because she wanted a college education and set an example for her daughter and nephew, "My daughter and nephew only know how my parents have difficult jobs and how hard they work." Scott wanted to set an example and be the first in his family to attain a college degree, "I guess for me, being the first member of my family to attend college is setting a pathway." Notably, Ashley and Daisy wanted to make their parents proud. Ashley expressed how her entire family was graduating with her, "We all receive a college degree, and I can continue to reach for the best with my college degree." Daisy's ultimate motivation was to make her parents "feel proud of how far they have come," She said, "I want them always remember me walking on stage to receive my college degree."

Further, Gilbert recognized that his mother and father were his motivation to pursue a college degree. He conveyed his parents were “incredibly supportive of his college education and how his parents teach him the value of hard work.” Gilbert went on to say that giving back to them was essential because “I love my parents so much and from my heart, I want to give my parents everything they’ve given me.”

Jeff recognized his parents’ sacrifices and valued their journey to be in this country. Acknowledging them was what motivated Jeff to continue his college journey:

If I do not take advantage of my parents’ sacrifices and what they worked for, all their efforts will be in vain. I do not want to do anything to disappoint their efforts to be in this country. So that’s what I think about whenever I have any challenging thoughts about school. My actions are not just affecting myself but also those that came before me. My parents have worked so hard for me to be where I am right now.

Moreover, Lydia valued her parents’ hard work and purpose in being in the U.S. to provide the family with better opportunities:

I’ve seen my parents and how hard they work. I know that they came from Mexico with \$5 in their pocket. So, I’m like, okay, well, if they can come to another country and live the way we live now, what’s preventing me from making me do more?

Nevertheless, Nevil described how obtaining a college degree and working as a professional were significant accomplishments. He was the first member of his family to receive a college degree and work in an office:

Our journey started with my ancestors, my grandparents, and my parents, and I was the only one that made it to the top. That's what it feels like. It is unbelievable that I am the first one to overcome this level of accomplishment and achievement. No one else in my family had ever held a position where they could have a computer or access to a computer, an office space, or a name plate. It is insane to say that I have a degree and work at UNG.

Daisy and Griselda illuminated how they were proud of their cultural differences and accent. Daisy detailed how at this "present moment, I feel proud...I know I am not the same as other students, but I learned that it is okay to be me." Lastly, Griselda said, "I am proud of my accent now....my accent bothered me a lot in high school, but now I don't care what people say about it because I am okay with it."

The participants shared their awareness of their parents' sacrifice and valued the hard work of being a migrant worker to make meaning of their personal growth. Furthermore, Daisy and Griselda expressed their pride and acceptance of the cultural differences, language barrier, and accent.

### **Giving Back and Awareness of Migrant Culture**

CAMP was paramount in developing participants' understanding of being migrant students. Participants expressed the significance of being migrant students and recognized how they benefited from a program like CAMP. The CAMP program was vital to completing their first year in college and developing their identity. Raising awareness of their migrant culture was essential for many of the participants. For Ashley, CAMP "gave me the experience of getting an education and brought awareness about the migrant culture I did not know."

The participants wanted to share what they had learned and give back to new migrant students. Ashley gave back by working as a peer mentor, “Working as a peer mentor allowed me to give back to the CAMP students. It is a great opportunity for students with migrant backgrounds, like me, to give back to migrant college students pursuing a college education.” She explained that:

After participating in the CAMP program, I learned more about my background and got to know other migrant students from different ethnic backgrounds. I enjoyed working with the migrant students and wanted to bring awareness to the campus community about the migrant population. Migrant students are from many cultures and are from different backgrounds. We held events representing many migrant students on campus and served food from various countries.

Daisy enjoyed serving on the MSU board. Being involved in a student organization of migrant students allowed her to stay connected and engage with each other migrant students:

MSU allowed us to share and discuss our experiences as migrant students. We have different students participate, and there are various events each week or month to raise migrant awareness. MSU also offered volunteering opportunities and got involved with charities.

Finally, Gilbert believed, “it gives me an edge to be a migrant student.” He wanted to be instrumental and be an example to other migrant students. Jeff concluded that he feels that being a migrant student gives him “perseverance” to continue his undergraduate studies. Jeff went on to say the following:

CAMP is instrumental in providing the mentorship and guidance he needs to achieve his academic goals. When comparing me to other students with family members with educational backgrounds, we're not on the same level because I have perseverance. Even though I don't have what they have, I'm still moving forward. For those reasons, I'm proud to be a migrant student because it's not easy.

### **Summary**

The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand what are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia and (2) to understand what supports and barriers to academic success migrant students experience. The qualitative study examined eight participants' personal stories and experiences in the CAMP program. Data was collected, and the analysis of participants' narratives found some similarities. A focus on the participants' perceptive and stories was essential to understand how the participants experienced their affiliation with CAMP and how they formed their identity development and self-authorship in a predominately White institution (PWI) academic environment.

As the participants' voiced their pre-college and CAMP experiences, subthemes emerged. Understanding the participants' experiences was significant in how they identified as migrant students and recognized their purpose, and postsecondary journey and achievements. During the time participants defined what it meant to be a migrant student and understood their purpose, postsecondary journey, and achievements, they made meaning of their experiences as CAMP students at a PWI. These experiences influenced how some participants felt a responsibility to give back and raise cultural

awareness about migrants. All participants experienced barriers and challenges related to being migrant students.

However, through CAMP, participants found their voices and identity. Lastly, participants felt that the CAMP program was instrumental in their academic success and personal growth. Participants articulated how CAMP assisted them as they defined their identity, beliefs, and social interactions, which helped them, understand their self-evolution toward identity development and self-authorship. They valued the support and guidance of CAMP and realized their self-evolution as college students.

## **Chapter VI**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the study was to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterized their experiences in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south. Overall, the research investigated how CAMP impacts migrant students who complete the program and earn college degrees. The study focused on making meaning of the migrant students' experiences and shared their voices with pursuing a college education at the University of North Georgia. The research presented that migrant students who enrolled in CAMP benefitted during the first year of college. Specifically, migrant students were able to enroll in an undergraduate program to pursue their academic goals with additional academic and financial support from CAMP in their first year.

#### **Summary of Study**

Currently, there is limited information about migrant students' experiences enrolled in college and CAMP (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is a paucity of literature that suggest the connections between CAMP students' experiences in a PWI, identity development, and self-authorship. The few studies conducted found that migrant students viewed CAMP as an essential factor in their pursuit of a degree and that CAMP has helped alleviate some of the struggles migrant students experience in pursuing their undergraduate degree (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020, Willison & Jang, 2009; Zalaquett et al., 2007). In addition, the research explored how CAMP students formed their identity development and self-authorship in a PWI academic environment. The study utilized Chickering's

theory of identity development to make meaning of the migrant students' intellectual, manual, and interpersonal competencies while developing their identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Also, the study used Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship to examine the CAMP students' journey toward self-authorship development and how they constructed their personal growth and knowledge during the program (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Due to the limited research in this area, there is a need to continue and explore the experiences and effects of migrant students attending a CAMP program at a PWI.

### **Restatement of the Problem and Research Questions**

With the growing migrant population in Georgia (Atlanta Regional Commission [ARC], 2016), there is a need for institutions of higher education to address the issues with educational discrepancies and support comprehensive educational programs for migrant students. This research helps reduce the educational disruption and other problems that result from migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) and their families' financial limitations. For higher education institutions to better serve and address the growing migrant population's needs, research on the CAMP program and how migrant students perceive their experience is crucial and necessary to understand the support services of CAMP and their motivations to pursue a college degree. The state of Georgia's significant migrant population growth is worth the study to understand how the CAMP program influences migrant students' college experiences. Further, the research is also essential to know how the learning community environment for CAMP migrant students assists with their identity development and self-authorship during college.

This study explored the following research questions to help interpret and



understand the CAMP program and the lived experiences of how migrant students perceive their experiences in a PWI.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

### **Summary of Methods**

A qualitative research design was the most appropriate for the study. Using a narrative inquiry approach provided the framework to make meaning of migrant students' stories and experiences. The use of narrative inquiry made meaning to the participants' thoughts, memories, and feelings related to their social context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This design presented how migrant students shaped their world and developed their experiences. The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand what are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north Georgia and (2) to understand what supports and barriers to academic success migrant students experience.

Eight participants from the CAMP program at UNG agreed to participate in the study. Each participant created pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and use when sharing their experiences during the research process. Table 2 presents the self-disclosures of the eight participants' brief demographic information and descriptive ethnicity. Virtual interview sessions via Zoom were most appropriate and conducted in December 2021. The semi-structured interview lasted approximately 90-minutes. Each transcript was transcribed first by the Kaltura cloud-based software, and the researcher manually edited

each transcript to ensure the accuracy of the participants' interviews. Participants reviewed and approved their interview transcripts to confirm data collection and analysis.

Using Seidman's (2013) interviewing approach, the guided open-ended question (see Appendix C) captured rich descriptive data during the interviews. To understand the context of the participants' experiences, questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities. The reconstruction and meaning of participants' experiences were followed with questions 12-26, which asked about their experiences and perceptions as migrant students who participated in a CAMP program at a PWI. The questions focused on what factors participants perceived to be most helpful with their academic success. Lastly, the questions also focused on developing their identity and self-authorship in a PWI academic environment. The semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility to explore in-depth vital areas to generate accounts connected to the participant's past, present, and future (Patton, 2015).

The six elements of the Labovian model approach were instrumental in analyzing the transcripts and structuring the participants' stories (Saldaña, 2016). Table 1 presents the six elements of the Labovian model analyzed each participant's narrative to understand their pre-college and CAMP experiences and comprehend how these experiences shaped their identities. The data analysis procedure included listening to the transcripts, taking notes, identifying codes, highlighting words, and capturing specific phrases to make meaning of their experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

### **Findings**

The study's focus was to understand the migrant students' experience with academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation,

financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals. The research also aimed to explore how migrant students experienced their affiliation with CAMP and how they formed their identity development and self-authorship in a PWI. Although the study focused on the barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals, several subthemes emerged. The significant subthemes that emerged are discussed in the findings and illustrated in Table 3.

All participants shared several factors and barriers that contributed to their developmental process. These experiences examined Chickering's theory of identity development and Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship to understand the evolution of migrant students' identities and growth toward self-authorship during their first year of college. It also presented the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) to explain the development of self-authorship through a learning partnership between the student and the support from others.

### **Disruption of Frequent Moves Findings**

All eight participants indicated various influences and factors in developing their identity and self-authorship. Each participant was impacted differently by the disruption of frequent moves. Although their experiences were vastly different, the study found similarities in the way these experiences impacted their goals and desires to pursue a college education. The subtheme that emerged from the barrier due to the disruption of frequent moves were language barriers, attending predominately White schools, cultural differences, not fitting in, and microaggressions.

The study found that migrant students connected learning with their lived experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). All eight participants made meaning of their experiences as they journeyed toward self-authorship development (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). In the study, it appeared that the disruption of frequent moves during primary and secondary education shaped the participants' perception of education and how they developed their identity. The frequent moves and changes in school affected the participants academically, their engagement with peers, and their perception of their self-definition.

Furthermore, Torres and Hernandez (2007) affirmed that the identity traits of minorities add to their developmental challenges compared to the identity traits of non-minorities. The findings suggested Lydia and Nevil's disruption of frequent moves had a negative impact emotionally and socially and impeded their pre-college experience in academic studies. The frequent moves resulted in Nevil transferring to nine different schools during his primary school years. Nevil described "moving at least nine times." Lydia lost school credits due to the constant moves. She explained, "I had taken some high school courses in eighth grade, and when I transferred to the new high school, I lost all my credits." These personal experiences and environmental factors can encourage or interfere with the participants' development (Pizzolato, 2003; Torres and Hernandez, 2007).

### **Language Barrier**

Upon arriving in Georgia and enrolling in Georgia's school system, four participants faced language barriers that impacted their academic success. The participants' language barrier was a fundamental factor in conceptualizing self-

authorship. The participants did not have the coping strategies and support to assist with their continued growth and development toward self-authorship (Pizzolato, 2003). For example, Daisy's language barrier resulted in her being held back a grade level when she first arrived in the U.S. She described how her "language and accent have made it difficult for her to participate in class discussions." Griselda could not comprehend lessons and effectively communicate with others in high school:

I did not want to attend high school because I felt different and didn't want to talk to anybody. I was frustrated because I didn't understand or could communicate with other students. My high school did not give the help to learn and it was very hard.

Nevil's language barrier was also academically challenging, and he failed the third grade. His first years in the U.S. were difficult due to his inability to speak English:

Academically, I did not know anything here. There's no such thing as English classes in Guatemala, so the language barrier was definitely hard. You know? My first year was tough because I failed the third grade and had to take summer classes.

For Scott, the lack of English proficiency hindered his academic success throughout primary, middle, and high school education. Scott described the challenges of his limited English skills as "tough from kindergarten to high school because I didn't do well in English."

The participants experienced a stigma during their primary, middle, and secondary education due to their language barrier. As a result of their language barriers and experience of feeling marginalized, the participants retreated from internally

determined beliefs and goals to conform to more beneficial external expectations (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Subsequently, the participants' marginalized experiences with their language barrier created a limited sense of self-authorship.

### **Predominately White Schools**

Six participants attended predominately White primary, middle and secondary schools. Participants described various experiences attending a predominately White school. For Jeff, the transition to a new predominately White high school from an inner city school district felt "like a different world and culture." Jeff "was astonished to see how limited the diversity was." Nonetheless, Jeff's transition to a predominately White high school was positive. He was "proud" to work as the high school news anchor in his high school as "When other people saw my face, they didn't see a White face...they saw my face."

On the contrary, Scott had a different and challenging experience. Although Scott previously lived in a diverse community, he experienced a "cultural shock" when he started attending his new school in Georgia. He mentioned:

I felt confused when I first started school in Georgia. You know this is the south, and at that time, it was a predominantly White school. You didn't have many people who spoke the same language as Spanish. You didn't have anything familiar with what you knew around you. You couldn't communicate correctly, and the people were either African American or White, one of the two.

Jeff's interactions with others and how he viewed himself did not suggest any developmental challenges with his identity. Because he lived in a diverse minority community prior to moving to Georgia, Jeff did not experience any sense of prejudice.

His experiences in how he saw himself, his identity, and his fitting in allowed him to acclimate to his new school. Nevertheless, Scott had a different experience with his interactions with others and how he viewed himself within his school environment. For example, Scott described how attending a predominately White school was “like a do-or-die situation to finish high school.”

Although participants defined their cognizance of attending a predominately White school, findings suggested their identities were not self-authored prior to attending the CAMP program (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The predominately White schools were essential in providing participants with an awareness and vulnerability about their identity. For most, CAMP provided a positive environment that enhanced their identity development and self-authorship. The CAMP educational environment significantly defined their internal beliefs and identity related to their social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

### **Cultural Differences**

Notably, cultural differences had a significant factor in the identity development and self-authorship of the participants. The participants reflected on their family origin and defined their cultural differences while also seeing themselves in the social context of their educational environment. Daisy, Griselda, and Nevil negotiated their distinct cultural values and expectations as they acclimated to the U.S. educational system. The participants’ cultural differences affected their understanding of identity and interrupted their perception of self and their new environment. Participants experienced challenges as they navigated their cultural differences.

For example, Daisy illustrated her experiences with cultural differences as a “journey” and characterized this feeling of integrating with diverse groups as “squish.” She continued saying:

I was being squished into so many diverse groups. I was the only different student in the entire school. When I first started attending school in the U.S., I felt intimidated. I felt in the new schools that I was squished into a diverse population.

Further, Griselda described attending high school in the U.S. as “hard” and “it was a difficult two-year experience of not learning.” Nevil also had a similar experience and described how his “whole world was in Guatemala with [his] grandma.” He concluded by expressing how “Teachers couldn’t recognize that I was different or accept me for who I was.” The participants experienced a challenge managing their expectations and stereotypes as they responded to their new environment and circumstance (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

### **Not Fitting In**

Fitting in high school was prominent in the participants’ identity development and self-authorship. The participants described themselves within the social context and made sense of how they were seen and evaluated by others. The participants’ experiences and coping skills of dissonance are essential for developing self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Many participants had challenges fitting in during their primary, middle, and secondary education, and managing how to fit in, affected each differently.



For example, Ashley and Gilbert did not fit in with the White students or Latinx students due to being enrolled in honor classes and AP classes. For Daisy, not fitting in school was tied to her cultural differences and language barrier. Griselda did not fit in due to her language barrier and accent, which resulted in her being bullied. Lydia also experienced bullying in high school and could not fit in with her peers. Nevil's constant moves, ethnicity, and dire financial circumstances were significant in not making friends and fitting in during his primary, middle, and secondary school years.

Ashley and Gilbert had similar high school experiences with not fitting in. They were in honor and AP classes with predominately White students and could not relate with the Latinx students in their high school. For example, Ashley "didn't know how [she] fit in or identify who [she] was...Hispanic students thought [she] was different because [she] was always around White students and was in classrooms other than theirs." Gilbert "did not fit in anywhere and grew up knowing more White students because there weren't many Hispanics in [his] honors classes."

For Daisy, making new friends in school was challenging due to cultural differences and her limited English proficiency. She described herself as a "person who stays low-key" and "it is not easy to understand other people's differences and perspectives." Griselda did not fit in due to her language barrier and accent. She experienced bullying and teasing from peers due to her accent:

Other students made fun of me because I had a thick accent. Even the Hispanic kids, instead of helping me, teased me about my accent and made fun of the way I talked. I got to the point of pretending I didn't care that they made fun of me, but

in reality, I just wanted it to stop. I just wanted to stop going to school. My accent bothered me a lot back then.

Lydia did not “fit in” with her peers due to being bullied in high school as she mentioned “A group of Hispanic students was against me for some reason.” The bullying and teasing made Lydia feel isolated and lonely. Nevil’s constant moves, ethnicity, and financial hardship made it challenging to fit in with his peers and “It was a huge fear to move constantly and not make friends...I didn’t have any friends because they couldn’t relate to my hardships or ethnicity.”

### **Microaggressions**

Participants described incidents that they believed to be illustrations of microaggressions. Some participants identified their experiences with microaggressions, stereotypes, and biases. The participants’ meaning-making of their educational environment allowed some to relive feelings of racism and discrimination. As a result, the participants experienced challenges constructing their self-identity in the context of their internal beliefs (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Each participant expressed their challenges as they balanced and managed their emotions while understanding the actions of others. In addition, the participants developed a sense of self-authorship as they made meaning to their complex emotions and conflicts with microaggressions (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The results revealed how Ashley, Gilbert, and Nevil experienced negative actions, indignities, and invalidations while in their primary and secondary education. For Ashley, the experiences of macroaggression made her feel “awful,” “ashamed,” and “angry for not speaking up.” Ashley questioned her identity and said, “I’m a Mexican American

female and didn't understand why people hated my people." She shared the experience of being publicly targeted and people shouting derogatory and racist remarks:

The people from my high school chanted over and over, *build that wall, build that wall*. Adults, maybe parents and students from my high school wearing Donald Trump t-shirts and hats with the slogan *Make America Great Again* were chanting. They were way too much, and it was terrible.

Furthermore, Gilbert felt that his school educators "discouraged him from pre-college programs" and that "Many of my teachers discouraged me from enrolling in the Dual Enrollment Program." Gilbert also said, "I don't feel like I got a good education, teachers talked down to me, and I questioned things that happened to me during those years in school." In addition, Gilbert "felt despondent" with the treatment from one teacher.

Nonetheless, Nevil's first encounter with discrimination was when he first arrived in the U.S. in third grade. He recalled "I was a third-grader and didn't know much about discrimination or prejudices." He felt that it was his "fault" for not knowing how to speak English, "I didn't know at the time I was being discriminated against because I did not know English, and my school was predominately White."

Two participants disclosed that they experienced some microaggressions in the PWI environment. For example, Ashley had a negative experience with an advisor while in college. "I had a terrible encounter with my new UNG Advisor." She felt the Advisor was "rude" and "condescending" toward her. She questioned herself if she was experiencing some subtle form of discrimination or "microaggression." For Ashley, the

experience made her feel she was being treated differently due to her ethnicity and said, “I think the Advisor talked to me this way because I am Hispanic.” She further explained:

My Advisor continued to comment that nobody would care about my undergraduate accomplishment and activities. He rudely told me that when the Graduate Admissions Office opens my application, this information will not be significant. He proceeded to tell me that *it is not like you are applying to Ivy League schools like Harvard or Yale.*

Gilbert also encountered some racial disparities during his first year in college. He described two negative experiences that made him feel “judged” for his ethnicity. The first experience was at the student gym, and another occasion was when the migrant students celebrated an on-campus event. He explained that:

Sometimes I would be alone at the gym, and one of the same employees there would come out and the employee would stand by me while we were working out. Being watched and stared at while working out was a weird feeling. I felt this employee was watching me because he thought I might steal the equipment.

On another occasion, an individual in charge of the campus cafeteria aggressively approached Gilbert and the migrant students yelling and asking about the event. Gilbert expressed he did not understand “What caused this individual to feel the need and ability to speak down to me or us in this way.”

Nonetheless, most microaggression encounters and experiences were in their primary, middle, and secondary education. The experience of being publicly ostracized or experiencing racism and discrimination was a realization of the

participants' identity as migrants. The microaggressions participants experienced were critical in how they viewed themselves, developed their confidence and trusted their internal voice. For most participants, the treatment from the educational environment hindered their internal foundation and interrupted their goals and beliefs. Further, the participants expressed their discomfort with their experiences of microaggressions and their lack of skills to handle these situations. The participants' recognition of racial affliction is crucial in developing their self-authorship (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

### **Inadequate Preparation**

Some participants' experiences with inadequate preparation varied.

Nevertheless, the findings suggested that the participants took the initiative to pursue their educational goals and became self-motivated. The disruption of frequent moves, relocating from other states to Georgia, moving to Georgia from other countries, and language barriers were significant factors in the participants' identity development and self-authorship growth. For some participants, these barriers negatively affected their academic success, and for two participants, it delayed their postsecondary education goals.

For example, Griselda's language barrier and inadequate academic support resorted to dropping out of high school and seeking work in the poultry plant to pay for her proprietary school tuition to learn English. She commented that, "I worked hard in the poultry plant and saved money to pay for my school and help my parents financially." Dropping out of school is a common outcome of migrant students that do not feel they can achieve academic success. Researchers found that when migrant students did not feel

adequately prepared academically, they resorted to dropping out of school to seek work (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Garza et al., 2016).

For Lydia, the constant moves were challenging academically. She described that “it was very difficult to lose credits because [she] did not want to fall behind.” She needed extra help to be on the same grade level as her peers, “The other students in my new high school were ahead of me, so I needed extra help.” Nevil described a sense of academic failure for repeating the third grade, “I took it personally that I had to take summer classes.” The inadequate preparation of his English proficiency made him feel “it was [his] issue, not the school’s or [his] parents’ issue.”

For Scott taking remedial courses delayed his graduation. He explained how his the language barrier was “challenging,” and he had to register for remedial classes even though it delayed him from completing his college degree:

All my classes in the fall, spring, and summer semesters were remedial classes, which was challenging for me. Every semester, three of the four classes I had registered for were remedial, which put me back with my graduation. The remedial classes were a setback.

Another contributing factor to the participants’ inadequate academic preparation is that they may not receive timely educational support services. For example, Griselda experienced challenges receiving academic support and assistance to complete her high school diploma due to her language barrier. Gilbert did not receive the appropriate guidance and advisement to the Dual Enrollment program or assistance with his pursuit of postsecondary education. Finally, the findings also suggested that although these participants had poor preparation and experienced academic challenges during their

primary, middle, and secondary education or their first year of college, most enrolled in AP or honor classes or the Dual Enrollment program in high school.

### **Middle and Secondary Education Support**

Middle and secondary education support provided a foundation and significantly influenced the participants' postsecondary aspirations. Six participants received educational support and guidance from their schoolteachers, counselors, mentors, or tutors. Some participants also received guidance and incentive from pursuing a college education. The educational support provided the initial concepts and exposure to the participants' sense of self and identity growth. Further, the educational support allowed participants to pursue their postsecondary goals.

For example, due to the support of her high school teachers, Ashley described her academic support experience as "decent." She expressed, "I was fortunate to have a pretty decent high school experience...some teachers cared about my education." Daisy had teachers who supported her and encouraged her academic achievements. She described one teacher as "Nice to have someone like him helping me since I didn't have many friends in high school, so having a teacher interested in supporting diverse groups made it easier for me."

Nevil also had a similar positive academic experience with receiving support from his high school teachers and described that they were also mentors. Nevil reflected that "I was fortunate enough to have a couple of mentors...my high school instructor inspired me and motivated me to do well." Jeff explained, "It was my guidance counselor at the time that made my high school experience successful...my guidance counselor went above and beyond to help me." For Lydia, the MEP tutor provided academic support and

educational resources to have her catch up with high school credits. “The MEP tutor would bring me books; if I needed them and give me resources like websites to work on. The tutor also talked to me about anything happening at school.” Furthermore, Scott received support and encouragement from his high school counselor, “My high school counselor was always pushing us to move forward.”

### **Financial Hardships**

Most participants were from migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families. The participants’ MSFW status is consistent with the U.S. Department of Labor 2015-2016 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) on the family annual income demographics (NAWS, 2018). Griselda dropped out of high school and worked in a poultry plant to help with the family finances. As Griselda was no longer attending high school, she was responsible for contributing toward the family finances. She “worked in the poultry plant and helped [her] parents with the finances.” Lydia’s father was the sole provider, and the family “had to move where it was better for him to work.” Nevil postponed his postsecondary aspirations to assist his family financially and worked in a factory.

For example, Nevil experienced dire financial hardships in high school and “High school was financially difficult for our family.” He elaborated:

The most significant struggles in high school were my family’s financial barriers and transportation. So, I felt the need to stay at home and find a way to contribute financially to the household. I started working at a factory after I graduated from high school.



The dire financial need was a significant factor for Nevil to postpone pursuing higher education. Researchers found that the financial need to work gradually outranked the migrant students' motivation to pursue an undergraduate education (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). The financial hardship was also substantial, with Griselda contributing towards the family financially and for Lydia's family's constant moves.

### **Legal Status**

The subtheme of legal authorization and documentation to live and work in the U.S. resulted from discussing the financial hardships. Four participants experienced difficulties with U.S. legal status and the uncertainties of their educational goals. Ashley learned during high school that her parents did not have legal status in the U.S. Her parents did not discuss their legal status at home. For example, she described how she was surprised about their circumstances and questioned her legal status:

He does not have legal status in the U.S., but he works hard to be in a better situation. I couldn't believe my parents were not legal and did not have a social security number, or they wouldn't tell me where I was actually born. I assume I was born in the U.S.

On the other hand, Nevil knew he did not have legal status. Lacking legal authorization prohibited Nevil from working or applying for a learner's permit or driver's license and pursuing undergraduate education. He mentioned that "By the last two years in high school, I have started to realize and accept my fate: to work in the field, work as my dad, and have no future."

Lydia's parents' illegal status in the U.S. and her obligations to drive the family for errands added an insurmountable amount of responsibility, "My family wouldn't let

me stay at school for a long time because I had to help and drive them everywhere.” Griselda’s circumstances were different since she arrived in the U.S. with legal authorization. Before she came to the U.S., Griselda had to wait in El Salvador for many years until her father received legal status to petition the family to move to the U.S. She mentioned:

My father came to the U.S. when I was young. At the time, he did not have legal documentation to live in the U.S. and could not travel to El Salvador. I did not see or know my father. After many years, he finally received his green card.

Participants must construct and rely on vital, internal academic goals to define their sense of self and develop coping mechanisms to balance their self-enhancement effectively (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Ashley, Lydia, and Nevil’s challenges with their parents’ illegal status is an issue they managed and coped with while pursuing their postsecondary education. Lastly, Griselda’s father did not reunite with his family for many years.

### **Lack of Exposure to College-Educated Individuals**

Seven of the eight participants’ parents’ level of education is consistent with the U.S. Department of Labor 2015-2016 NAWS survey on family educational proficiency levels (NAWS, 2018). Seven of the participants were first-generation college students. They did not have parents or family members that completed a primary, elementary, or secondary or had higher education experience. Due to the parents’ limited education and lack of college knowledge, they were more likely to be inadequately prepared in a social and academic college environment than their cohorts (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

For example, Daisy is “the first one from her mother’s side of the family to go to school and receive an education.” Griselda “always wanted to go to college, but it was hard for [her] because [her] parents didn’t go to school or college and didn’t understand how important it was for [her] to get a college degree.” Jeff’s parents had limited education, and he was not exposed to college-educated family members. He described how it was at his disadvantage not to be able to seek educational guidance from his parents:

Having educated family members gives them mentorship and guidance. They can reach out to their family member and ask for help about college or their career if needed. In my case, as a migrant student, as a first-generation American college student, I don’t have that luxury.

For Lydia, “being a migrant student affects [her], and [she] can’t depend on anybody at home to help [her] with [her] college education.” She shared her parents “didn’t go to college and did not understand.” Lydia expressed, “I never had a good environment to do my work and class assignments,” and further mentioned, “I am struggling with how to study.” When Nevil parents left Guatemala, “they did not have an education” and could not understand his academic goals and aspirations. Scott also shared how his parents did not attend school past the fifth grade.

Although the participants had limited exposure to college-educated family members, they strived to attain a college degree and not fall behind academically. According to Pizzolato (2003), marginalized first-year college students could develop self-authorship depending on their coping skills to successfully complete a college degree.

## **Communication Challenges**

The subtheme of family communication emerged while participants described their lack of exposure to college-educated individuals. Seven participants disclosed communication challenges with their parents. Participants had similar experiences in which they did not want to make their parents worry about their challenges or felt they could not understand. They expressed that they did not discuss specific topics at home. For example, Ashley detailed how “in high school, [she] told [her] mom about [her] challenges, and she would hear [her] but did not say anything, she never gave [her] any advice.” Furthermore, Ashley described how she “feels children of immigrant parents tend to be very independent and suffer alone.” Daisy expressed she “can’t talk to [her] parents about [her] concerns with college because they will not understand, and they have never been to school.”

The participants’ external formulas were defined by how their families’ examples of communication (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). For example, Gilbert said how he “learned never to say anything about things that happen because it may cause trouble.” Griselda “was not able to share [her] emotions or problems with [her] parents.” Lydia “never told [her] parents anything about what went on in school because [she] didn’t want them to be worried about [her].” On the contrary, Nevil shared his challenges with his parents while in high school. He explained how he “took the opportunity to talk to [his] parents and tell them how [he] felt growing up.” Finally, Scott “didn’t share challenges or problems with [his] parents. Scott had the support of his siblings, and they shared challenges. Although the participants learned their communication skills from

their families, each constructed and relied on their internal goals and values to determine their sense of self and pursue a college education (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

### **Managing College and Family Obligations**

Six participants experienced challenges managing college and family obligations. Each participant described how they had to contribute to the families' needs while attending college. Managing college and family obligations created increased pressure for Ashley, Griselda, Lydia, Nevil, and Scott. The demands and expectations to assist the family may result from the need to translate in English for parents, financial hardships, cultural differences and values, expectations of the participant's role in helping the family, and a limited understanding of the accountabilities of pursuing a postsecondary degree. The participants' parents did not understand the social and economic benefits of attending a higher education institution (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

For example, almost all participants expressed how parents did not understand the responsibilities of being undergraduate students. Some participants described their parents' expectations and challenges of living on campus, studying, participating in on-campus activities, or using the campus gym. Ashely shared how she "helped [her] mother a lot at home with [her] younger siblings, so it was harder for her when [she] decided to leave off for college. On the contrary, Daisy "was the first in [her] family to attend college, and [her] parents did not understand that [she] had to live in college." Griselda's parents' "depend on [her] because [she] is the oldest and speaks English." Lydia's parents did not understand the postsecondary education culture and her desire to be physically healthy. She explained how "they did not understand that [she] wanted to study at school instead of being at home helping them and helping [her] sister with

homework” and that “My parents did not want me to go to the gym or shower at the gym. They did not want me to study at school either because they needed me at home to help them.”

Nevil “started getting pressure from [his] family and siblings to help them with family issues and contribute financially.” He expressed they would tell him, “Why are you not here helping us? We need you to be home.” Scott had to delay his college education to support his family. He worked full-time and enrolled part-time in an undergraduate program.

The multiple obligations of managing family needs limit their college participation and may cause a delay in achieving academic goals (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Participants reflected on their sense of duty to assist their parents with translating, caring for younger siblings, and contributing to the family finances. Although participants respected their families’ values and expectations, they struggled to manage their educational commitments. The study suggested that participants did not display or possess self-authorship before pursuing a college degree. The participants’ growth towards self-authorship challenged their current ways of knowing and conceptions of self.

### **CAMP Attributes**

The present findings were similar to the literature on the experiences of migrant students enrolled in CAMP. These findings were consistent with Araujo’s (2011) study that found migrant students viewed CAMP as an essential factor and a significant influence in their undergraduate education. Participants acknowledged the essential role of the CAMP recruiter while they were interested in pursuing their higher education.

They also credited the CAMP recruiter for streamlining their transition to college by providing them with information about CAMP, the admission process, requirements, and financial assistance during their first year of college. CAMP assisted the participants with application materials and FAFSA applications. CAMP's positive support, guidance, and resources encouraged the participants to complete their first year of college.

Participants also acknowledged that the CAMP Director, Recruiter, Retention Coordinator, Counselors, Coaches, and Peer Mentors foster a family environment and community of fitting in and an enriching learning environment. Moreover, the participants recognized the CAMP staff as role models.

The support services CAMP provided assisted the participants in achieving academically and completing their first year of college. The participants reflected on CAMP services that enriched their college experience. CAMP provides academic, financial, and emotional support, coaching, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, career and leadership development, college success workshops, webinars and training, cultural enrichment activities, study skills training, time management, and financial and budget management strategies, and offers internship and scholarship opportunities. CAMP alums also have the opportunity to serve as CAMP peer mentors. Participants had a positive experience participating in the mandatory CAMP cohort meetings, and some participants disclosed how they looked forward to the cohort meeting guest speakers. Some participants expressed that enrolling in the first-year experience class with their CAMP cohort was a positive experience in which they bonded and learned how to navigate and utilize the campus resources. CAMP also assisted the participants with course selections, early registration assistance, and completing their FAFSA applications.

Additionally, living in the apartments with their CAMP cohort during their first year of CAMP was another positive outcome for most participants. Lastly, the monthly stipend and the use of computers and laptops also relieved some of the participants' financial concerns.

The CAMP program support and resources were significant findings in Araujo's (2011) study and consistent with this study. In addition, the present study was similar to Escamilla and Trevino's (2014) study, which reported that migrant students described three main themes: fictive kinship, family relationships, and social cultivation. The present study revealed how the participants developed a sense of purpose and identity during their first year in the CAMP program at a PWI. Participants were enriched academically and encouraged to participate in student organizations, which developed leadership skills. Further, CAMP was instrumental in assisting the participants during the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CAMP program's academic, financial, and emotional support and encouragement ensured that the participants successfully completed their first year in college. These findings are also similar to Araujo's (2011) study that although migrant students faced many challenges during their first year of college, CAMP effectively provided the financial and academic resources and emotional support for most of these students to continue to their second year of college.

Participants elucidated how CAMP provided effective time management and financial and budget management strategies to ensure college success. Moreover, the participants developed the skills and strategies to manage their obligations and navigate the college environment and resources. Each participant embraced being a migrant student, expressed pride and respect for their families, and had a positive outlook on



pursuing an undergraduate degree. Finally, participants gained an acceptance of their identity and raised awareness of their migrant culture.

Participants in this study developed a positive outlook on their postsecondary educational endeavors and their academic identity. Each participant revealed overcoming obstacles, challenges, and acceptance of their identity. For example, Daisy concluded, “At this present moment, I feel proud...I know I am not the same as other students, but I learned that it is okay to be me.” Griselda expounded, “I am proud of my accent now....my accent bothered me a lot in high school, but now I don’t care what people say about it because I am okay with it.” The findings of this study aligned with O’Connor et al.’s (2020) study that sought to understand how CAMP students and CAMP alumni developed their academic identities and handled their sense of belonging at the university. With the support of CAMP, participants developed positive goals and aspirations to pursue their undergraduate degrees. Specifically, the support services CAMP provided assisted the participants with developing their identity and self-authorship to achieve academically.

### **Migrant Students’ Identity Development**

With the support of CAMP, participants developed and incorporated all seven vectors of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Participants recognized their personal growth as they valued themselves as migrant students at a PWI and understood their beliefs and self-interests. Moreover, they comprehended the values of others and respected the differences between others.

The participant’s internal competence, the first vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), allowed participants to build positive relationships with

CAMP and flourish in a higher education environment. Ultimately setting the foundation of the participants' self-identity. The participants' experiences with microaggressions in their educational environment significantly influenced how they managed their emotions, the second vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The participants characterized their emotions and understanding of their feelings and learned effective strategies to handle these circumstances.

In addition, the academic support from the CAMP allowed participants to move through autonomy toward interdependence, the third vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The participants' positive experience on how CAMP provided them with a community, fitting in, family, a sense of belonging, and instant friendships aligns with the Identity Development vectors of developing competence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, and developing mature interpersonal relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Further, the encouragement of CAMP to get involved in campus activities and student organizations allowed the participants to also move through autonomy toward interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The participants developed self-sufficiency to pursue their own goals and interest and became self-directed. This vector also described how the participants established reciprocal and equal relationships with college community members.

Further, the participants developed mature interpersonal relationships, the fourth vector of Identity Development, as they voiced their acceptance and established an intimate and healthier relationship with their parents and family (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Most participants manage a job and undergraduate studies due to their financial needs. Nevertheless, the participants' stories reflected how they made sense of these

experiences. Additionally, the participants resisted the expectations of others and their family obligations to continue to succeed in college, establishing identity and a sense of self, the fifth vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Furthermore, the participants shifted from their family's inflexible beliefs to balance their self-interest and developed their purpose, aspirations, and personal interests to pursue a college degree, the sixth vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Lastly, the participants' development of integrity, the seventh vector of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), was also cultivated during their first year of the CAMP program. The participants learned effective time management and planning strategies to ensure college success, establishing commitments and clear boundaries. Participants established their sense of self and developed their self-esteem. This final vector focused on how the participants shifted their beliefs and values to accept their social and cultural context.

Chickering's theory offered an understanding of the stages of identity development that impact participants' experiences and personal identity. The study attempted to explore how the participants grasped these changes in their self-evolution. The seven vectors contributed to the research on how the participants' identities develop during the CAMP program at a PWI.

### **Migrant Students' Self-Authorship and Learning Partnership Model**

All participants participated in a CAMP program at a PWI. Each participant described their CAMP experience as positive. Exploring their experiences with CAMP allowed them to understand how CAMP was instrumental in their identity development and self-authorship. According to Baxter Magolda (2001), understanding previous

experiences can influence how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and make meaning of new experiences. Each participant made meaning of their self-evolution from external influences to establish their internal influences. Participants developed an understanding of their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Participants' reflections and making sense of their experiences influenced how the participants framed their understanding of themselves to ensure their academic success. The construction of one's experience or meaning-making is a vital element of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Torres and Hernandez (2007) found that minority students displayed positive identity influences when they reconstructed social knowledge. The process of reconstructing knowledge and confronting conflict with external formulas resulted from the dissonance between previously formed beliefs and exposure to a new environment. Most participants initially experienced cognitive dissonance when they first enrolled in a PWI. However, the participants' participation in CAMP validated or transformed their beliefs about their identity and growth toward self-authorship. The participants identified the dissonance they experienced while making meaning of their barriers and expectations related to being a migrant student at a PWI. These contributing factors were instrumental in their development and academic success.

Furthermore, the present study was consistent with Baxter Magolda's (2001) study that high-risk college students who experienced pre-college challenges could develop self-authorship during college. Each participant focused on the context of their past and present emotions and thoughts to make meaning of their experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). As participants made meaning of their experiences, the research found

that self-authorship developed during different times of their undergraduate journey. Not all participants moved from an external to an internal sense of self-definition during their first year of CAMP (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Participants developed and made meaning of their transition from external influences to establish their internal influences at different times of their postsecondary careers. Each participant took steps toward self-authorship by taking accountability for their external and internal life demands, managing matters effectively, and making informed decisions (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

In addition, the present study findings were consistent with Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) Learning Partnerships Model, which illustrated the development of self-authorship through a learning partnership between the student and the support from others. CAMP influenced the migrant students' epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Each dimension of the LPM highlighted the learning outcomes of the migrant students at a PWI.

Further, the study suggested that LPM assisted the migrant students with creating an internal belief system and identity and sharing authority and knowledge with their relationship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The Learning Partnerships Model facilitated the migrant students' shift from authority dependence to developing self-authorship, assisted them in understanding the college environment, and helped them develop skills to handle challenges (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). LPM engaged migrant students and provided a balance of autonomy and support to develop their internal beliefs, identities, and constructions of relationships (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). LPM made meaning to migrant students' experiences with the CAMP program support and services. It also explained how the migrant students stayed with the program

as they developed their internal beliefs, identities, and constructions of their relationship with CAMP at a PWI.

### **Limitations**

Using a narrative inquiry approach provided the framework to make meaning of migrant students' stories and experiences. This design presented how migrant students shaped their world and developed their experiences. The narrative inquiry method allowed participants to engage in conversations and describe their experiences through living and telling their thoughts and memories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Highlighting the participants' quotes confirmed the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015). The participants' quotes ensured that the study's findings, interpretations, and data were discernable (Patton, 2015).

Additionally, the migrant students disclosed their experiences, memories, and feelings and shared their voices about pursuing a college education at a PWI. The participants' quotes established and demonstrated trustworthiness to assist with validity (Patton, 2015). However, the present study relied primarily on the participants' personal stories and experiences in the CAMP program. The participants' memories and recollections about past experiences were retrospective. Participants may not have been able to recollect all facts regarding earlier experiences that may have provided this study with additional understanding of their experiences as migrant students and their experiences participating in the CAMP program.

Understanding the sample, including demographic information about the participants, can also assist in determining the study's transferability. Participants were male and female students whose parents are seasonal or migrant farmworkers and have

worked in the past 24 months in a migrant seasonal farm work environment. The recruitment of the participants was disseminated by the Director of CAMP and counselors via the CAMP listserv, and announcements were made during the CAMP cohort meetings. As a result, the study participants identified as migrant students and were members of the CAMP program. The sample included individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. One participant disclosed being born in Myanmar, one participant was born in Guatemala, and one participant was born in El Salvador. Five of the participants identified themselves as having Mexican origins. Except for three participants who graduated with their undergraduate degrees, all other participants were undergraduate students pursuing their degrees. The present study did not include students who have withdrawn from their postsecondary education.

### **Implication for Practice and Higher Education Professionals**

The findings of this study suggested that CAMP empowered migrant students' identity development and self-authorship in pursuit of their undergraduate degrees. Further, CAMP enhanced migrant students' personal growth as they valued and understood their beliefs and self-interests. Moreover, CAMP sets the foundation for migrant students' academic achievements, community engagement, educational and career endeavors, and the development of future leaders and educators.

The study findings further suggested CAMP was a positive impact on the eight participants. After a review of the results and findings, there were areas to improve the continued growth and advancement of the CAMP program and students. The following are the implications for practice: (1) support and require CAMP students to attend cohort meetings all four years of college; (2) offer financial resources and academic services to

participants that have completed the CAMP program to ensure retention and persistence of graduation; (3) provide service learning opportunities entailing cultural and educational enrichment activities to other states and destinations; (4) offer scholarships to CAMP students to Study abroad; (5) Create a supportive CAMP alum network to stay informed of their achievements essential to the program's success.

As previously noted, with the growing migrant population in Georgia (Atlanta Regional Commission [ARC], 2016), there is a need for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to address the issues with educational discrepancies and support comprehensive educational programs like CAMP to assist migrant students. The findings of this study carry several implications for institutions of higher education senior executive leaders. As IHEs continue to focus on undergraduate student enrollment, retention, academic performance, and graduation rates, the present study findings offer solutions with the CAMP program to relieve academically and financially some of barriers migrant students experience in postsecondary education.

The CAMP program significantly impacts migrant students' academic success and achievements. The support of CAMP programs at IHEs is pivotal and vital to promoting migrant students' postsecondary degree goals. IHEs should increase their efforts to recruit and support migrant students on their college campuses. In addition, college campuses should create a cultural environment that intentionally promotes awareness of migrant culture, its diversity, and inclusion. Empowering the campus community to be innovative and creative to support all students, including race, ethnicity, and gender, is equally essential. The principles and values to serve the diverse population are the foundation to improve all students' and colleagues' educational quality and



sustain all college readiness projects. Training the campus community to obtain knowledge and skills and communicating with them about the migrant population, diversity, and integration of the CAMP are essential steps in the implementation process and throughout the project's life.

In addition, academia needs to attract diversity among scholars from many regions of the country and globally. There is an urgency to address the growing migrant population and ensure the new changes in the IHE's demographics. Attracting diverse administrators and faculty in various disciplines is crucial to meet the rapidly growing migrant student enrollment. The campus community's understanding of the migrant student demographics will fill a gap in their cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusion. Lastly, increasing migrant awareness is critical for all college students to develop an understanding of other cultures and prepare them to co-exist in a diverse and multinational society. It will also prepare college students as they journey into an integrated global workforce.

### **Implication for Future Research**

As heretofore indicated, there is limited information about migrant students' college experiences and CAMP enrollment (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is a paucity of the literature that suggests the connections between CAMP students' experiences in a PWI, identity development, and self-authorship. As noted previously, the few studies conducted found that migrant students viewed CAMP as an essential factor in their pursuit of a degree and that CAMP helped alleviate some of the struggles migrant students experience in pursuing their undergraduate degree (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009;

Zalaquett et al., 2007). There is a dearth of research on the CAMP program and migrant students at UNG, and the present study fills this gap. While the current qualitative study has rich data, it only captured the experiences of eight participants in a CAMP program from one PWI in northern Georgia. Further research across different PWIs with a CAMP program is essential to compare data between CAMP and IHEs.

Additional research would be appropriate to determine the impact the CAMP program had after they completed the one-year program. A future study focusing on migrant students' retention and completion of postsecondary and graduate education is significant to understanding the outcomes of the CAMP services after the program's completion. However, Escamilla and Trevino (2014) stated that since the establishment of CAMP in 1972 to serve students from MSFWS, there was no accurate or formalized tracking system to stay in communication with CAMP staff and their alums. There is limited tracking and follow-up with CAMP alums. The CAMP staff stays in touch informally with their alumni (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014).

Research on CAMP alums to explore their academic and career success is essential to the sustainability and continued funding of the CAMP program. The study results could also significantly influence federal and state governing agencies, migrant organizations, institutions of higher education, and high school educators in guiding and promoting postsecondary education to migrant students with valuable concepts to support educational programs necessary to provide services for migrant students.

## **Conclusion**

The findings suggested that CAMP support services encouraged participants to pursue their postsecondary education goals and achieve academic success. Participants developed their identity and established self-authorship as migrant students due to the influences and impacts of CAMP. Participants gained acceptance of their identity and felt great pride as migrant students attending a PWI. Furthermore, all participants expressed how they were proud of their parents' sacrifices and struggle to provide for their families and make the journey to live in the U.S. The eight participants completed the one-year CAMP program and have continued with their academic goals. Further, with the continued support of CAMP, three participants of the eight participants graduated with their bachelor's degrees, and two continued to pursue a master's degree. These participants stayed involved with CAMP after their first year of the program, and each participant credited the CAMP program for their academic achievements throughout their undergraduate journey.

The motivation for this study was to capture the migrant students' autobiographical stories, elevate their voices, and provide awareness of their CAMP program experiences. The study focused on making meaning of the migrant students' experiences and sharing their voices with pursuing a college education at a PWI. Finally, the study found that CAMP is the nexus of migrant students' academic success. CAMP was influential in overcoming the migrant students' experience with academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals. The CAMP support and services

encouraged the participants to continue their educational aspirations and overcome obstacles and barriers.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Institutional Review Board Approval**





**Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
For the Protection of Human Research Participants**

**PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT**

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**Protocol Number:** 04243-2021

**Responsible Researcher(s):** Lourdes Bastas

**Supervising Faculty:** Dr. Jamie Workman

**Project Title:** *The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP): A Narrative Inquiry Approach.*

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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator ([irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu)) before continuing your research study.

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**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

- Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** the recording of interviews, provided the recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be deleted immediately from all devices. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.
- To maintain participant confidentiality, pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate file, from corresponding name lists, email addresses, etc.
- As part of the informed consent process, interview recordings must document the researcher's reading aloud of the research consent statement, confirming participant's understanding, and establishing willingness to take part in the interview or focus group. Participants must be provided a copy of the research consent statement.
- Upon completion of the research study, collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.

If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

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*Elizabeth Ann Olphie*      *12.01.2021*  
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.  
Please direct questions to [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) or 229-253-2947.

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Revised: 06.02.16

**APPENDIX B**

**Informed Consent**

## Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled “The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program: A Narrative Inquiry Approach,” which is being conducted by **Lourdes L. Bastas**, a **student** at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterize their experiences in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) intended to assist students during their first year of college at a predominately White institute (PWI) in the south. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the experiences of CAMP students in a PWI in the south. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately **90 minutes**. The interview will be audio recorded and video recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be deleted from recording devices. **This research study and your participation will be kept confidential.** Your identifiable information will be replaced with a pseudonym in publications or presentations. No one, including the researcher, will associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Lourdes L. Bastas at [llbastas@valdosta.edu](mailto:llbastas@valdosta.edu). This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Guide and Protocol**

## **Verbal Consent**

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled “The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program: A Narrative Inquiry Approach.” The research project is being conducted by Lourdes L. Bastas, a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterize their experiences in the CAMP program intended to assist students during their first year of college at a predominately White institute (PWI) in the south. The Zoom interviews will be recorded in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You’ll be asked to verify the transcript for accuracy. For participating in this study, you’ll receive a \$20.00 electronic gift card. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Can you please verbally consent to the following: “The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am agreeing to be part of the interview process, therefore, agreeing to participate in this study and I am certifying that I am 18 years of age or older. I have electronically signed the consent to partake in this study and I will receive a copy of this consent form.”

Thank you for your participation in this research study. To increase accuracy, I will record this Zoom interview. Once this study concludes, I will delete this recording to protect your confidentiality. I will not use your real name; the pseudonym will identify you throughout the study. Your real name will ONLY appear on the consent form. To confirm, you have selected the following pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a PWI in north GA?
2. What supports and barriers to academic success do migrant students experience?

## **Interview Questions (Adapted from Escamilla & Trevino, 2014)**

### **Context**

1. To participate in this study, you had to identify as a migrant student participating in a CAMP program. Tell me about yourself, your family background. Including how many siblings do you have? How many members live in your household?
2. Tell me about your ethnicity and your birthplace. What type of community were you raised in?
3. What do your parents do for a living? Tell me about their educational background (siblings, parents, grandparents, godparents, other family members). Share who raised you? Both parents, a single parent, grandparents, or by whom?
4. How would you describe your high school education experiences? Did you attend the same high school? Did you transfer to other schools or moved to other states?
5. Describe your feeling and thoughts when you started a new school. Tell me how you felt on the first day of a new school? I want you to remember and be present in that moment and describe your experience.
6. Thinking back to your experiences in a new school, describe the most challenging part of attending a new school. What emotions arise when you think back on your experiences attending a new school?
7. Did you share these challenging experiences you described with your family? Who in your family did you share these challenges too? If your family learned of your experiences, how did they support you during this time?
8. Were there specific individuals or situations that made your experience successful while attending high school? Who were these individuals, and how did they assist you?
9. Describe the path that you took into higher education, more specifically, this university? When did you decide to go to college? Why did you choose this university?
10. Are you the first member of your family to attend college? What does it mean to you to be the first in your family to go to college? What does it mean to your family for you to attend college?

11. How did you first learn about the CAMP program? Can you describe how you felt to know there was a college program to assist migrant students?

### **Reconstruction and Meaning of Experiences**

12. Tell me how you felt on the first day of your CAMP orientation? I want you to remember and be present in that moment and describe your experience.

13. Thinking back to your CAMP experience, was there ever times or a particular moment when you felt that you should leave college? (If yes) Why and when did you think you needed to withdraw from school? Explain what was going on with you and what you were experiencing during that time.

14. What has your experience been like as a migrant college student at the university? Describe your academic experiences, coursework, social experiences, interactions with faculty and staff?

15. Describe how does being a migrant college student influences your academic experiences?

16. What was the most challenging part of your first year of college for you? In what way was it challenging?

17. What has motivated you to continue your college education? Who helped to keep you going to school?

18. Were there individuals or situations that caused you difficulties? Who were the individuals, and what were the cases? Were these experiences in the classroom, interactions with peers, interactions with family?

19. Did these experiences cause you to think about being a migrant student? Describe your thoughts and how you felt during those situations, and how you feel now.

20. Did you share these challenging experiences you described with the CAMP staff? (If yes) Who in CAMP did you share these challenges too? If the CAMP staff learned of your experiences, how did they support you during this time? How did they interact with you?

21. Were there specific individuals or situations that made your experience successful during your first year of college? Who were these individuals, and how did they assist you?

22. What impact, if any, do you feel CAMP had on your first year of college experiences?

23. Are you involved in other student organizations and activities outside of CAMP?
24. How does being a migrant college student influence your involvement in student organizations and interactions with peers outside the CAMP activities? In what ways does being a migrant college student affect your social experiences at the university?
25. Do you think students can benefit from a program like CAMP? What type of student do you think will thrive in a CAMP program? Why?
26. Would you please share anything additional you would like to highlight at this time regarding your CAMP experiences?



**APPENDIX D**

**Research Project Advertisement**

Hello,

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled “The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program: A Narrative Inquiry Approach.” The research project is being conducted by **Lourdes L. Bastas**, a doctoral *student* in the Leadership Doctoral Program at Valdosta State University.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to fill a gap in the literature by describing how the migrant students characterize their experiences in the CAMP program intended to assist students during their first year of college at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the south.

Participation will involve one **90-minute** individual interview. The interview will be scheduled at a convenient time for you and will use the Zoom video platform. The Zoom interviews will be recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas accurately. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity, your school or organization. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. For those who are eligible and partake in the study, they will receive a \$20.00 electronic gift card.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Lourdes L. Bastas at llbastas@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Thank you,

Lourdes L. Bastas  
Doctoral Candidate, Leadership  
Valdosta State University  
llbastas@valdosta.edu  
(706) 510-8474

Table 1

*Six-Part Labovian Model Coding Template: “Ashley” Table*

<b>Question - Context</b>	<b>Abstract</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Complicating Action</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Coda</b>
Thinking back to your experiences in a new school, describe the most challenging part of attending a new school. What emotions arise when you think back on your experiences attending a new school?	Story about her high school marching band performance experience.	Sophomore Year in High School	During the other high school marching band's performance, the people from my high school chanted over and over, build that wall, build that wall.	Awful and Ashamed. The incident also made me wonder what my high school peers thought of me as a Mexican-American student.	I did not know about my Mexican culture and history until I started attending UNG.	When I began attending UNG, I gained vital knowledge about my culture. My literature classes introduced me to Chicano literature, and student clubs taught me about Mexican history, values, ideas, and beliefs.
<b>Question - Reconstruction and Meaning of Experiences</b>	<b>Abstract</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Complicating Action</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Coda</b>
Were there specific individuals or situations that made your experience successful during your first year of college? Who were these individuals, and how did they assist you?	First day attending the CAMP orientation	The first year of college	I went to a predominately White high school in north Georgia and was shocked to see many Hispanic students in the CAMP orientation.	CAMP gave me a community of family and friends away from home.	CAMP was one of the reasons I was able to solidify my identity and fit in.	The CAMP people were motivating and gave me a purpose.

*Note.* The six part Labovian model constructed the narrative from the data.

Table 2

*CAMP Participants' Demographic Profile Table*

Pseudonym	University of North Georgia Enrollment Status	First Semester in CAMP	Self-identified Ethnicity & Birth Order	Primary Language Spoken at Home	High School Community	Pre-College Preparation
Ashley	Alumni First Generation	Fall 2018	Latinx Mexican-American, Oldest Sibling	Spanish	Predominately White School	Honors Classes/Advanced Placement
Daisy	Alumni First Generation	Fall 2018	Southeast Asian, Myanmar, Oldest Sibling	Karen	Diverse School Transferred to a Predominately White School	None
Gilbert	Undergraduate Second Generation	Fall 2019	Tejano, Mexican Origin, Oldest Sibling	Spanish and English	Predominately White School	Honors Classes
Griselda	Undergraduate First Generation	Fall 2021	Salvadorian Born in El Salvador, Oldest Female Sibling	Spanish	Diverse School	None
Jeff	Undergraduate First Generation	Fall 2020	Latinx Mexican Origin, Oldest Sibling	Spanish	Diverse School Transferred to a Predominately White School	Dual Enrollment Program
Lydia	Undergraduate First Generation	Fall 2020	Latinx Mexican Origin, Oldest Sibling	Spanish	Predominately White School	Dual Enrollment Program
Nevil	Alumni First Generation	Spring 2017	Guatemalan Born in Guatemala, Oldest Sibling	Spanish	Predominately White School	Advanced Placement
Scott	Undergraduate First Generation	Spring 2016	Latinx Mexican Origin, Oldest Male Sibling	Spanish	Predominately White School	Advanced Placement in Spanish

*Note.* Participants' descriptors are self-disclosed. The purpose of Table 1 is to present the participants' academic achievement, descriptive ethnicity and pre-college preparation.

Table 3

*Subthemes: Barriers and Attributes of Being a CAMP Student*

Barrier / Attributes of Being a CAMP Student	Themes/Subthemes	Participants' Quotes
Barrier of Disruption of Frequent Moves	Disruption of Frequent Moves	"I felt fear every first day of school except for my junior and senior years of high school. Fear of not succeeding and fear that I wouldn't be accepted. Fear of not making friends, fear of failure, all the fears I could think of I had."
	Language Barrier	"Academically, I did not know anything here. There's no such thing as English classes in Guatemala, so the language barrier was definitely hard."
	Predominately White Schools	"On the first day of class, I was astonished to see how limited the diversity was. I remember one classmate in my English class telling me she was the only Hispanic student in that class until I got there."
	Cultural Differences	"I was the only different student in the entire school. When I first started attending school in the U.S., I felt intimidated."
	Not Fitting In	"I didn't know how I fit in or identify who I was."
	Microaggressions	"I'm a Mexican American female and didn't understand why people hated my people."
Barrier of Inadequate Preparation	Inadequate Preparation	"It was very difficult to lose my credits because I did not want to fall behind. The other students in my new high school were ahead of me, so I need extra help."

	Middle and Secondary Education	“I was fortunate enough to have a couple of mentors. My high school instructor inspired me and motivated me to do well. He is from Puerto Rico and speaks Spanish. I looked up to him because he was a teacher and had achieved a high rank in the military.”
Barrier of Financial Hardships	Financial Hardships	“The most significant struggles in high school were my family’s financial barriers and transportation. So I felt the need to stay at home and find a way to contribute financially to the household. I started working at a factory after I graduated from high school.”
	Legal Status	“The possibility of enrolling in an institution of higher education was out of reach. I was an honored student with limited friends and no legal status in the U.S. I tried to avoid my situation and feelings of numbness by focusing on my academics and joining ROTC.”
Barrier of Lack of Exposure to College-Educated Individuals	Lack of Exposure to College-Educated Individuals	“My father once answered me and said he went to school in Mexico and the highest level of education was the equivalent of the third grade. That’s like the highest grade he attended. My mother only went up to the second grade. My father explained that they lived in poverty in Mexico and, of course, had to help and provide for his siblings.”
	Communication Challenges	“My parents would hear me out, but I would say that I dealt with things on my own during high school. They were physically there, but I had to rely on myself to deal with my emotions. I

		couldn't rely on them for emotional support or advice.”
	Managing College and Family Obligations	“When we came to this country, everything was different than what we knew in El Salvador. We came here, and my parents did not know English, and they did not know about the education system. They depend on me because I am the oldest and speak English.”
Attributes of Being a CAMP Student	Attributes of CAMP	“CAMP is a phenomenal program!”
	Family Environment and Community of Fitting In	“CAMP taught me the value of being a migrant student, and I am proud of being a migrant. CAMP made me feel accepted and that I was in the right place. It gave me a community with similar experiences and made me feel like I had a community. I now had people who would accept me.”
	Academic Support	“CAMP helped me not directly but indirectly by telling me, hey, you can do it... not only can you do it, but this is also how you can do it. They impacted my life personally and academically.”
	Financial Support	“I don't have that option to ask for my parents for financial help with my education, and CAMP helped me with my FAFSA and learning how to manage my finances.”
	Effective Strategies for Time Management and Planning	“Managing my time was the biggest challenge. I didn't use a calendar my first semester and did not keep track of anything. All these schedules and assignments were all up in my head. I thought that's how it works, but it doesn't work out that way.”

Student Organizations and Developing Leadership Skills	“CAMP knew I had the potential to be a leader. Although I was involved in clubs and a member of the marching band in high school, I did not serve as a leader. CAMP helped me establish myself as a leader.”
Role Model and Valuing Educational Support	“I want to say how amazing the CAMP Director is, who passes on the baton to the next migrant student. Many students come to college without a support group, without people teaching them the do’s and don’ts of college and how to study and ensure the student succeeds. The CAMP Director motivates me to finish college.”
COVID-19 Pandemic	“They’re the ones that called me when I was failing and motivated me to get back into school. CAMP was a lifesaver for me, and I appreciate their support.”
Pride	“Our journey started with my ancestors, my grandparents, and my parents, and I was the only one that made it to the top. That’s what it feels like. It is unbelievable that I am the first one to overcome this level of accomplishment and achievement.”
Giving Back and Cultural Awareness	“After participating in the CAMP program, I learned more about my background and got to know other migrant students from different ethnic backgrounds. I enjoyed working with the migrant students and wanted to bring awareness to the campus community about the migrant population.”



Table 4

*Participants' Parents' Profiles Table*

Pseudonym	Parents' Birthplace	Native Language	Mother's Highest Level of Education	Father's Highest Level of Education	Mother's Agricultural Field or Occupation	Father's Agricultural Field or Occupation
Ashley	Both parents born in Mexico	Spanish	Did not complete elementary school	Did not complete elementary school	Not employed	Currently employed at a Poultry Plant. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
Daisy	Both parents born in Myanmar, Southeast Asia	Karen	Never attended school	7 <sup>th</sup> grade in Mexico	Poultry Plant	Poultry Plant
Gilbert	Mother born in Texas and Father born in Mexico	Spanish and English	Master's Degree in U.S.	Associate Degree/ Mechanic Certificate in U.S.	Teacher Gilbert – Worked in a vineyard picking grapes	Mechanic in a Poultry Plant
Griselda	El Salvadorian	Spanish	2nd grade in El Salvador	Never attended school	Poultry Plant Griselda – Worked in a Poultry Plant	Poultry Plant
Jeff	Mexican	Spanish	2nd grade in Mexico	3rd grade in Mexico	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Both of Jeff's parents work in agriculture	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
Lydia	Mexican	Spanish	High School in Mexico (did not graduate)	5th grade in Mexico	House Cleaner	Agriculture, Milking Industry, Dairy Farms, Chicken Houses
Nevil	Guatemala	Spanish	4th grade in Mexico Completed GED in U.S.	Did not complete grammar school in Mexico.	Agriculture, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Nevil – Worked in a Factory	Agriculture, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker, Chicken Houses, Landscaping
Scott	Mexican	Spanish	5th grade in Mexico	Did not complete 5th grade in Mexico	Currently not Employed. Worked in agriculture for a long time.	Currently works as a Crane Operator. Lumber mills and worked in agriculture for a long time

*Note.* Participants' parents' profiles are self-disclosed. The purpose of Table 3 is to present the participants' parents' language, level of education, and occupations. Table 3 also shows Gilbert and Griselda's work before applying to the CAMP program.