



“Understanding the Motivations and Cultural Work Values of Male Mexican H-2A Migrant Farmworker Youth in the U.S.”



University of Missouri

Grace J. Patton; Taylor N. McDonald; Fiorella L. Carlos Chavez, PhD

INTRODUCTION

- Latinx migrant farmworker (LMFW) youth are foreign-born, unaccompanied, and one of the most vulnerable and underrepresented subgroups of migrant farmworkers in the U.S. (Arcury et al., 2014).
- Despite their young age, LMFW youth work under poor weather conditions (i.e., rain and heat) to earn an income.
- Although previous research has shown that remittances to family is a key factor for Latino youth migration migration (Carlos Chavez et al., 2021, in press), little is known about their intrinsic and cultural motivations.
- We argue [im]migrant Latino youth – ages 18 to 20 – come to the United states with grit (*ganas*), a culturally inherited motivation to hard work and sacrifice for one’s family.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

- (1) To explore the the direct and indirect motivations of work for Male Mexican H2-A migrant farmworker youth.
- (2) To understand the role of cultural values on Male Mexican H-2A migrant farmworker youth’s work motivation in U.S. agriculture.

METHOD

Data was collected from Latinx migrant youth ($n=10$; 100% male, 100% from Mexico, 100% H-2A visa , aged 18 to 20, Mage =19.1) living in rural South Georgia.

Procedures. Semi-structured audio voice-recorded interviews in Spanish (45 to 60 minutes). Participation was voluntary; participants received a \$10 incentive. IRB approval and NIH Certificate of Confidentiality.

Data Analysis. Phenomenological approach (i.e., deeper understanding of lived experiences; Van Manen, 1997). Thematic analysis. Open coding. NVivo 11 Pro Software. Use of memos and field notes.

Validity. Peer debriefing meetings in teams.



PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Quotes
(1) “It’s about getting distracted by something else.”	(a) Making connections during “leisure” time (i.e., playing soccer with friends, talking on the phone with family) (b) Staying busy to cope with homesickness	Jose-19 years: “ <i>I call my family to see how they are doing, or I organize my room and play soccer with friends from work. We don’t have transportation to go any other places, so we distract ourselves here.</i> ”
(2) “Farm work is temporary.”	(a) Providing advice as a way to motivate others (b) Remembering future plans in Mexico	Tony-20 years: “ <i>We share stories about our families when we are lonely and think about how we won’t be here (in the U.S.) forever.</i> ”
(3) “Group and individual responsibilities towards work,”	(a) The meaning of work (b) Migrant youth as “bread-winners” (c) Finding self-worth through work	David-18 years: “ <i>For me It’s like making a living. Work means that when you do it you are also making your life, the basics. That you are building your house and other things. If there is no work, then you don’t make any money. You don’t earn any money. So you work and you make a livelihood, and you are earning. You gain respect from everyone.</i> ”
(4) “Put grit (<i>ganas</i>) forward”	(a) Family prosperity requires hard work and sacrifice (b) Culturally inherited motivation	Juan-18 years: “ <i>Don’t think about going home, you have strong. It’s difficult to be here, but if you’re strong and put ganas forward, you’re going to hold on. You have to suffer in order to have something.</i> ”



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mexican H-2A migrant farmworker adolescents confront challenging experiences while working in the U.S. However, to distract themselves, they turn to leisure activities (i.e., playing soccer, talking/playing on their phone) and motivate themselves and others through grit (*ganas*) which reflect cultural perseverance, self-worth, and financial aim through hard work and sacrifice.

Future research could look at levels of food insecurity, work safety interventions, heat stress prevention, pesticide exposure, among Latino migrant youth in other regions in the U.S. In addition, future studies could examine older cohorts of migrant farmworkers’ (i.e., young adults) health status over time. The inclusion of undocumented migrant workers needs to be taken into account to get a better picture of this young population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Our eternal gratitude to All Latinx migrant farmworker adolescents for their patience, time, and willingness to participate in this study.



@CarlosChavezPhD
carloschavezf@missouri.edu