AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved:

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This thesis explores the experiences and negotiations of belonging for children of Mexican migrant farmworkers in Oregon. Ethnographic data was collected over the course of several months with Mexican migrant farmworkers and their children in agricultural fields in Oregon and at Oregon State University. The children in this project have found ways to redefine notions of belonging while resisting placement into the migrant generational divides and notions of assimilation utilized by the state. Using child-centered approaches this thesis finds that the children of migrant farmworkers craft their own belongings across multiple moral worlds. I contribute to the scholarship on childhood and migration by arguing that children continually cross different moral and social boundaries in order to negotiate belonging both within the consumer laden world of the modern childhood and beyond.
Children of Mexican Migrant Farmworkers in Oregon: experiences and challenges with belonging

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Ashley Crawford, Author
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The journey to this research project began when a sleepy eyed young girl accompanied her dad to the agricultural fields of the Willamette Valley and met many other kids around her age with their parents. My time as a ‘sleepy eyed young girl’ and my dad’s job as a farm worker became the foundation to my interest in this research.

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1. Introduction

….I sat on the floor of the not quite finished room with Adriana and Emmanuel. Adriana instructing Emmanuel as to what he needed to do. She was like the school teacher. Emmanuel was being a bad student, according to his sister, because he was not listening to her. Instead he was drawing pictures of video game characters he had seen on TV. Adriana instructed him that if he continued he would not be allowed to go to recess. Emmanuel continued drawing.

Despite the fact that Emmanuel did not have a video game console, nor had he ever played video games, he had favorite characters and favorite games. This incident shows Emmanuel’s insurgence into children’s consumer culture, even without having purchased or played the toy. This consumer culture is evident in the economic development of the modern childhood. In this example, Emmanuel is imagining participating in what has become the modern childhood. Emmanuel’s life is complex. He does many things that are not typically considered part of children’s lives. He and his sister Adriana are highly mobile and have visited their grandparents and other family in Mexico while their parents stay in Oregon. Emmanuel and Adriana also regularly accompany their parents to work in Oregon agricultural fields. They do not work in the sense that their parents work, but they often finish their homework while their parents work in the fields. Emmanuel and his sister find unique ways to find attachments and belonging.

Emanuel is six years old and his sister Adriana is eight years old. Their parents are Mexican migrant farm workers. This project gives a rare and small glimpse into their lives and the lives of other children of migrant farmworkers in Oregon. Though Oregon has a lengthy and varied migration history with Mexicans, the children are rarely seen or heard from within research (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). This does not mean that Mexican migrant children have not been researched. When child migrants are portrayed in research it is usually either in terms of their level of integration in the host society or else in terms of their ability to uplift their family’s integration (Gonzalez-Berry and Mendoza 2008, Gonzales-Berry, Mendoza and Plaza...
Identity, integration, assimilation and acculturation have been the focus of many studies with youth migrants (Crawley 2011, Portes and Rivas 2011, DeJaeghere and McCleary 2010). The issues of personal feelings of belonging have only recently been analyzed in regards to youth migrants (Davis-Yuval, Anthias and Kofman 2006, Nette and Hayden 2007, Reynolds and Orellana 2009). Rarely are these children seen as subjective social actors who contribute to the culture and society around them in unique and varied ways. These children’s desires, feelings, attachments are rarely analyzed or allowed to be voiced in social research.

**Purpose of the Study**

Utilizing a child centered approach the goal of this project is to examine the ways children of Mexican migrant farmworkers in Oregon experience, understand and craft belonging. Childhood is a socially created system, and as such children are active social actors just like adults (James 2008). Children negotiate their belongings and perform in accordance with their own ideas and agency separate from, as well as connected to adult worlds. Children are a very unique group to analyze. Adding the additional layer of migrant to a child often complicates the ideals of modern childhood (Zeitlyn 2012). Child migrants are rarely researched in terms of their own subjective experiences of integration and belonging (Gonzales-Berry, Mendoza and Plaza 2006, Portes 2008, Ni Laoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrrell and White 2011). Global capitalistic ideologies interact with personal, cultural and familial understandings, beliefs and values of what it means to belong (2011). With these interactions of the global and the local, brings many contradictions and clashes which may spur new forms of sociality. Child migrants are at the center for understanding these new forms of sociality precisely because they are uniquely positioned to experience global and local interactions.
Chapter Organization

This thesis is laid out as follows:

Chapter two dives into the historical context for modern children and childhoods as well as a brief history of Mexican migration in Oregon. Chapter three reviews the relevant literature about child migrants. Chapter four reviews the relevant theoretical directions that give structure to this thesis. Chapter five discusses the methods used for this thesis. Chapter six presents the results and discussion. Chapter six offers concluding remarks.
2. Historical Backgrounds

Introduction

In order to understand the importance of analyzing how migrant children understand belonging, it is vital to understand the invention of the modern childhood and also how historic and social processes have created a deeply prejudicial idea of who and what a migrant should be. The goal of this section is to show the competing subjectivities of migrant children that formed through capitalistic neoliberal discourse, as both a migrant and a child and why it is important to allow these migrant children a voice to proclaim their own subjectivities and how they believe they belong.

Historic Overview of Anthropology’s Studies of Children/Childhood

The field of anthropology has traditionally been associated with researching the ‘other.’ Children emerged rather early in anthropology as an ‘other’ to research in the 1920’s starting with the famous Margaret Mead and children in Samoa (Levine 2007). Generally, children did not maintain popularity as valid research subjects. At the same time as the modern field of anthropology was emerging, so too was psychology. The field of psychology would go on to project their ideas and concepts as universal (2007). To this day there is a large divide in the psychological world between nature and nurture. The idea of child development emerged in the early 1900’s as a concept created by westerners which was marketed as a universal understanding of children (2007). It was not long before anthropologists began refuting these universals through cultural examples. Mead rejected the belief in the universality of the child experience, and that children were bound to their culture, not to some similarity in their DNA as children. At the same time, Bronsilaw Malinowski was researching Trobiander children and he
too, found a lack of consistency between western culture children and the children in which he researched (2007).

With anthropology regarding children as culturally bound subjects, this lead the way for more in depth research regarding children as subjective social beings (Levine 2007). Edward Sapir advocated for, though never conducted, more in depth research of children which emphasized “the subjective experience rather that the behavioral conformity of the child, and assumed the child to be an active and definitive decision maker concerning the meanings of culture patterns” (2007). Though it seems little attention was paid to Sapir in regards to his push for a more in depth understanding of children until many years later. Anthropology did not see widespread profound accounts and advocating for understanding the subjective experience of children and childhood until the 1980’s and 1990’s (James 2008). Though there are rare exceptions which pioneered the way for the development of an Anthropology of Childhood.

Myra Bluebond-Langer is one of these rare examples of research that advocated for the subjective experience of children and their worlds (1978). She researched children who were dying from cancer, and used many methods which have become integral in the study of childhood and children. One such method is allowing children to initiate conversation with the researcher, and also allowing children’s behavior to guide whether or not they want to be part of the research. After Bluebond-Langer published her book about this research in the late 70’s, there was a large push in anthropology to focus more on children (1978).

Creation and subsequent Definition of a Modern Childhood

The creation of the current idea of a ‘modern childhood’ has roots in the capitalistic market economy and the changing value of the child (Zelizer 1985). This commoditized understanding of childhood as Zelizer argues is part of the development of the 20th century understanding of the
child’s economic value which marks the shifting values of childhood. Zelizer argues that children have always been tied to the capitalistic market economy since the age of industrialization, but the ways they have been connected have changed. This economic transition of the western child has created an idea of ‘the child’ and expectations, driven by the market, of a childhood (1985).

Prior to 1900, children were not only allowed to work, but they were expected to contribute to the economy of the household through work both inside and outside the home (Zelizer 1985). Around this time there were continuous national and state level battles over how to determine legitimate and acceptable work for children (1985). Age soon became an easy way to determine legitimate work, as opposed to type of work, and many states enacted age limits for working (1985). This designation of age as a category of which to define barriers to work became highly symbolic in the invention of a modern childhood (1985). As Zelizer shows age was used as a designator for these work restrictions simply because of ease, instead of creating restrictions for things like type of work, age was an easier way to create divisions on working (1985). After 1900 and progressing through time, children were less allowed in the market economy as wage earners and pushed into education, primarily because it became more “economical to educate them as opposed to hire them (1985: 112).”

With children increasingly left out of the market economy as family wage earners, their worth then became more tied to emotional value for their parents and family (Zelizer 1985). The emotional value of the child became economical in a multitude of ways. Parents soon were able to be compensated for the loss of their children through child life insurance for purely emotional reasons. Socially and culturally appropriate discourse describes that children are supposed outside the market economy, yet children are some of the best consumers. Companies have
discovered the market economy that they have in children and that children are viewed as priceless objects of their parents (1985). Childhood consumption has become so profound that consumption has become inherently tied with the idea of having a childhood. Part of children’s innocence is seen in their desire for child shows and toys (1985).

Children are deemed as priceless, instead of useful (Zelizer 1985). The paradox here is that the modern reason to have children is because they are inherently priceless due to their emotional value, yet many of the modern values that come with children are tied up in the market economy, which gives children a price. Children’s role in the market economy has always been around but special brands, companies and market niches have only begun since the exclusion of children from contribution to the household economy (1985 and Katz 2008). This is intriguing particularly because children predominantly became consumers in their own right only after they stopped earning their own wage. This inherently implies that parents will be responsible for serving children in this market economy. If parents cannot help their children to participate in the market economy then they are somehow missing out on what is now seen as vital aspects to childhood (1985 and 2008).

The economic and emotional values of a child are tied together. Children are useful for emotional purposes and can ‘work’ if compensated and taught some sort of a lesson in character according to the individualistic values of the western world (Zelizer 1985). Children cannot work if it is for the purpose of perpetuating the market economy because according to notions of childhood, children are outside of the capitalist market (1985). Although children are expected not to work for a wage they are embedded in the idea of consumption. To have a childhood is to consume. A child’s worth partly lay in their ability to consume. Zelizer’s describes how children are perceived as being useful to the emotional development of their parents, which attaches
children’s identity to that of their parents (1985). Zelizer argues that the more current conceptualizations and values that are deemed inherent in children and necessary in childhoods are due to contradictory values of the capitalistic market and human values (1985). Children’s worth became commoditized through the capitalistic values being inscribed as human values (Zelizer 1985). Children are emotionally priceless to their parents but economically worthless to their parents. Children’s roles have shifted in accordance with the capitalistic market economy (Zelizer 1985).

Cindi Katz (2004) agrees with Zelizer (1985) in the sense that children are in essence tied up with the market economy. Though Katz (2004) expands these ideas and agrees with Karl Marx in regards to child labor as foundational for the early stages of capital accretion, and that this is true across historical and geographic boundaries (2004: 143). Katz argues that capitalistic development brought continued escalation of child labor in the countryside as well as in third world urban and industrial areas (2004). Child labor is indeed vital to the migrant families in this project, particularly labor done by the migrant girls. However, when talking about child work it is seen as something very bad and some of the child migrants were not allowed to work. All of the parents saw child labor as nearly reprehensible and even the fact that they had to bring their children to their work place was viewed as a disdain. Though, most of the parents and some of the children were quick to point out that their children were not ‘working’ they just had to come along for lack of a money for a babysitter. Though bringing their kids to their workplace was not seen as an appropriate place for kids, it was also a small sense of pride because they made sure that their kids did not actually ‘work.’

Katz argues that this idea of child as central to capitalism is made possible partly through commoditizing children’s everyday lives (2004). Katz argues that childhood has become a
‘spectacle’ (2008). A spectacle meaning, “the accumulation of capital to the point of collapse; where capital itself becomes image (2008).” Katz follows Marx’s ideas about the commodity (2008). The commodity according to Marx, is something that can be bought and sold and has been made through the means of production (2008). The commodity is important in terms of childhood and children, because it becomes a distraction to detract from the social concerns of everyday life. The commodity here, takes on a large role of influence, because the commodity both ‘embodies’ and obscures’ social relations of production, therefore having the commodity is not as important as a creating an image that you have the object (2008). Katz describes how people are doing things just for the sake of ‘appearance’ and not simply the experience, and in this light, we also see people buying things just for the sake of having it, and not for its use (2008). Child migrants learn the value of this commodity, whatever it may be, and desire it. Children themselves have also become a commodity and are produced through the social reproduction of the market. Children’s value now partly comes in through children being and becoming great consumers (Zelizer 1985 and Katz 2008). Since children can be seen as commodities that means that they are a part of the accumulation for other consumers such as their parents and the broader society. By ‘buying’ a commodity such as their children, they are making an investment in the future through their children. This makes sense when we think about it in terms of child migrants because their parents justify migration and strenuous working and living conditions based on the idea of betterment in the future.

Consumption is inherent in capitalism, and capitalism has been ever expanding through globalization, which has created a globalized image of childhood (Suarez-Orozco 2003). This image is rooted in western discourse primarily because of the power of the western world to dictate the rights and wrongs of the world we can consider this a neocolonial act. Now that we
have a historical underpinning of the creation of children as rooted in the market and consumption we can start to see that children, defined as a group together through age and standing in contrast to adults, have not always been thought of as having a ‘childhood.’

The essence of this modern childhood can be described in traits such as innocence, purity, a proximity to all things natural, morally and inherently good, lacking responsibility, lacking knowledge (Duschinsky 2013). Childhood is a time period in which children are not supposed to participate in adult world issues, such as work, caring for others, primary responsibility of the household and definitely not in the political realm (Duschinsky 2013, Zelizer 1985, and Horton 2008). Cindi Katz described the modern view of childhood as in a constant state of ‘becoming’, and that childhood implies an “always incomplete” state (2008). Katz describes how we are so apt to discontinue essentializing almost all others but children are consistently placed into essentialized notions (2008). Katz describes this, “when it comes to children, we seem able to see them as innocent, unformed, as savage, as ‘good’ or as vulnerable without historicizing, locating, or specifying their more complicated unstable and contingent subjectivity (Katz 2008).”

Due to childhood bearing these traits as inherent and therefore children possess these characteristics. We see children likewise being seen as vulnerable (due to their innocent/moral turpitude/lack of knowledge), in need of protection and in general not given credit for actions and decisions that may affect their lives in profound ways (Duschinsky 2013).

This ultimately gives adults extreme governance over children’s lives. The United Nations developed a special convention on the rights of the child which stated children’s immaturity, physical size and predominantly age, as reasoning to why children should be given special protections and rights (James 2008, Bluebond-Langer and Korbin 2007). This is a double edged sword because children in this instance are seen as extremely vulnerable and in need of adult
protection, yet children are also acknowledged in the world as ‘having a voice’ and are seen as “articulate commentators on the social world (James 2007).” There is danger with the way children’s voices are being used in society today. As Allison James points out, the voices of children are being used in social discourse in the western worlds as examples of all of children’s experiences and also as examples of authentic human conditions such as innocence (2007). Thus, children’s voices are creating a false idealized group of people which has the power to disregard children’s own unique experiences and perspectives (2007).

It is extremely difficult to define all children in one coherent category together. Children do not all share defining inherent traits, values or behaviors, just as their adult counterparts similarly do not (James 2007, Bluebond-Langer and Korbin 2007). Children are incredibly diverse. They speak as many different languages in the world as adults do, value different things, believe in different religions and spiritualties, and overall are a diverse people. Why then does society not recognize their diversity? Chandra Mohanty describes this similar dilemma faced by women, “What characterizes women as a group is their gender (sociologically, not necessarily biologically, defined) over and above everything else, indicating a monolithic notion of sexual difference (Mohanty 2003).” Juxtaposing children in for women, and age in for sex, we could say the same thing about children. What characterized children as a group is their age over and above everything else, indicating a monolithic notion of age difference.

Childhood researchers Myra Bluebond-Langer and Jill Korbin agree that the progression of childhood and children studies shows many similarities to the progression of women and women’s studies (2007). Bluebond-Langner and Korbin expand on this argument to state that children’s perspectives, like women’s, are important to incorporate into our theoretical worldview in order to produce a truly reflective account of the cultures and peoples of the world.
Childhood is a socially constructed category just like gender, and children are as varied and dynamic as other groups such as women (James 2008). Children need to be analyzed for their distinct subjective understandings of the world and not because of their common status as humans in the making who are all lumped together simply based on one designating factor of age. As Bluebond-Langer and Korbin state, “we need to confront the messiness and untidiness of social reality, not reduce it (2007).” By studying children as real social subjects and actively striving to understand their social worlds we are actively finding more of the messiness of the social world, instead of simply attempting to force children to fit into neatly prescribed social worlds (James 2008, Gardner 2012 and Hill 2006). Children have a part in the making of their worlds and that does not always fit into the adult centric viewpoints.

**Mexican Migration in Oregon**

Mexicans takes up a large majority of the migrants and especially of the migrant farm workers (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). Oregon alone has over 100,000 farmworkers, most of which are Mexican though various other agencies have estimated that the number could be much higher even estimating that as of 2006 Oregon had around 125,000-175,000 undocumented migrants (2008). Even those numbers appear to be modest estimates with some estimating more like 600,000 or more migrants in Oregon, of which 98% are Latino, and the majority of the Latino are Mexican (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008:145). The history of these people in Oregon is important to understand in order to give context for the current conceptualization of migrants.

Oregon has a long history of Mexican migration. Before Oregon was a state, the Oregon Country and later the Oregon Territory bordered Mexico the present day border of California (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). There are historical accounts of vaqueros or Mexican
cowboy’s presence in Oregon long before Oregon’s status as a state (Stephens 2007). Also, various mule herders, miners, merchants all came from Mexico into Oregon (2007). There was no such thing as a border at that point; it was simply different lands and different territory. This lasted until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 in which the United States of America took control of California and the southwest states leaving behind a legacy in which ‘the border crossed us, we didn’t cross the border,’ due to the many Mexicans who lived in California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona when their land went from being Mexican to American (Gonzales 2011). Oregon’s census first account of a Mexican was in 1850, and listed one 13 year-old boy to be of Mexican origin and living in Oregon City (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). By 1920 the census showed 569 Mexicans living in Oregon who had been born in Mexico. Though Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza caution us that the number may be misleading because the census did not count Mexican-Americans who were born in California or the southwest who migrated seasonally to Oregon for work (2008). The Mexican revolution and the development of commercial agriculture in the United States fueled Mexican migration during the early part of the twentieth century (Stephen 2007). The record of money orders in Oregon show larger amounts of money orders being sent from Oregon to Mexico during the summer harvest months and the money orders dropping significantly during the winter and spring, which indicates the presence of Mexican farm workers. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza argue that this shows the seasonal migration of Mexicans in Oregon in the early 20th century (2008).

The earlier seasonal migrants settled more so in Eastern Oregon to work in things likes the sugar beet fields. Even during this time there was heavy marginalization of the Mexican people in Oregon. As more Mexicans began immigrating to Oregon for seasonal employment, the local communities took to ostracizing the migrants (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). Though the
seasonal workers were believed to “tolerate difficult conditions because they knew they were not permanent (2008).” This idea of temporary deprivation in the hopes of betterment later is reminiscent of the same kinds of attitudes experienced today with migrant farmworkers, although today the farmworkers tend to be more permanent (Gonzales 2011).

Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza describe that the Mexicans in Oregon prior to the World War II era, were essentially out of sight of local Oregonians, therefore they were also out of mind (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). The depression era was a difficult time for most citizens to find work, yet there were still employment available in agricultural work in Oregon and Mexican came to work those jobs. However as Lynn Stephens describes Mexican migration actually decreased in part to the great depression and less available jobs and crops, but also in part to national policies aimed at exclusion and deportation such as the Immigration Act of 1917 (Stephens 2007:79). This act put several requirements on Mexican migrants, such as literacy and English proficiency. However, it was not long before congress passed measures which allowed various agriculture to get by these rules (2007:79). Many Mexicans were coming from California were the agricultural work was being fulfilled by US citizens who had become poverty stricken during the depression. Mexicans who stayed, and became permanent residents were not eligible for the social welfare programs of the New Deal. Even the Mexicans who stayed in Oregon, were forced into abject poverty, therefore were on the periphery of society and out of public sight for the most part (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008).

The legacy of poverty and inequity would continue, but the Mexicans who came in the World War II era as Braceros were no longer out of sight. From 1943 to 1947 Oregon received over 1,500 bracero workers. Bracero workers came to Oregon and the Willamette Valley in the summer of 1943 for the first time in the midst of a World War II labor shortage due to the mass
number of young men going off to war and women filling the ‘Rosie the riveter’ positions. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza describe that there was indeed initial backlash to the hiring of foreign hands in Oregon agriculture particularly due to the patriotic sentiment at the time caused in part by the war. Oregon newspapers perpetuated these ideas. An article by the Monmouth Herald in June of 1943 described the Oregon people as patriotic enough to do the labor that the Mexicans had been brought to do (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008:28). Mexican braceros were stereotyped at this time as lacking farm knowledge and skills and also as stealing and taking jobs from the local Oregonians (2008: 34). Regardless of the fact the farmers were experiencing a lack of labor, thus the Mexicans who came during the bracero time were a welcome relief to the lack of laborers. The idea that Mexicans lacked knowledge necessary for the agricultural work was unfounded as many newspapers reported the expertise of the bracero workers. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza argue that at this time there was indeed an underlying racialized order occurring, which ultimately has continued over the decades (2008: 42). Because they were ‘brown’ and not black, thus slightly closer to whiteness, they were less openly racially discriminated against than other workers of the time. There was however, much incentive for Oregon growers to continue hiring Mexican workers. There was much social approval of hiring Mexican laborers who would come for the growing season and then appeared content to return to Mexico, thus institutionalizing the patriotic ideals, but also perpetuating racial discourse. Mexicans were viewed in racialized ways and seen as inferior to their Anglo-Oregonian counterparts (Gonzales-Berry & Mendoza 2008). However, the Mexicans of the bracero time were seen as preferable workers to other immigrants such as the Jamaicans who were darker and much more heavily racially prejudiced (2008).
Growers could pay Mexican laborers less than their Oregon counterparts, though Mexican workers did not quietly accept this inequity. Instead, due to the bracero program guidelines set out by the Mexican government the workers had a right to protest their wage and inequity of conditions. Many braceros in Oregon did just that, including one such incident in Medford in which braceros were paid by the box instead of by the hour like their local counterparts (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008:47). After the war, braceros were sent back home to Mexico. Though the bracero program continued nationally for another 20 years they nevertheless were not employed officially in Oregon after 1947 harvest season. In the early years of the bracero program it was the duty of the Mexicans to pay for their own trip to and from the US (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). In later years it was the growers in the US who would be responsible for the cost of their trip, which is one reason why Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza believe Oregon failed to participate in the government sanction bracero program. Never-the-less Mexican workers continued to come (2008).

Fierce patriotism combined with cold war discourse of Anglo-superiority and exclusionary practices put the structure in place for Operation Wetback in 1954 (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). Operation Wetback militarized the US-Mexican border in an attempt to halt illegal immigration of Mexicans into the US. The consequence of Operation Wetback is the racialized discourses of Mexicans in the US that have followed Mexicans through to today. Operation Wetback’s firm stance against illegal immigration dehumanized an entire nationality of people and allowed for various stereotypes to form in the social backgrounds from which many Mexicans immigrated to both legally and illegally (Gonzales 2011). It was not uncommon for Operation Wetback to raid fields and takes both the legal bracero workers and those who immigrated illegally back to Mexico (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008).
Throughout the 50’s during operation wetback Mexicans continued coming to Oregon mostly without legal papers (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). Though the bracero program was essentially ended in Oregon it does not mean that the flow of people that the bracero program supported ended along with it. Oregon’s lack of desire for the bracero program did not mean that the farmers in Oregon did not desire them as laborers (2008). Oregon’s end with the official bracero program was more related to the state’s desire to control the migrants than with the lack of need for labor (2008). With Oregon officially opting out of having braceros after 1948 the workers that did come no longer had many of the protections that they once had as braceros. Under the bracero agreement between Mexico and the US, the Mexican laborers had a right to strike, and they had limits on the hours worked per day. Oregon actually benefitted drastically in the 1950’s and 1960’s by not allowing braceros in because the gap was filled by other Mexican migrants (2008). Many of these migrants did not have papers, but the migration route had been established officially due to the bracero program and there was now a strong labor market which desired Mexican laborers (2008). Oregon’s legacy in ending the bracero agreement earlier than most other states, tells a deeper story than just about migrant labor, it shows the extreme dehumanization and discrimination that was taking root (2008). This dehumanization throughout the mid-20th century has ties with the current discrimination that migrants face, and has left a racialized legacy that leaves little room for Mexican migrants to integrate into this society, which eventually came to be associated with many Latino migrants (2008).

During the 1960’s and 1970’s Mexican migration dropped off considerably (Stephen 2007, Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). This was partly a result of the discriminatory practices and legacy of operation wetback. This time period ironically also coincided with the organizing efforts of the National Farmworkers Association lead by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez
Though the union movement did not gain as much steam in Oregon as it did in places like California and the Southwest, there was still large scale strikes in eastern Oregon the Willamette Valley began to see its own organizing (2007).

We see throughout this time Mexican laborers being hired as contractors to find willing farm workers in Mexico and bring them up to Oregon’s farms (Stephen 2007). Usually these contractors promised all sorts of benefits to the potential workers, high wages, mild climate, indoor hot water, decent housing, recreational activities for them and their families (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). However, these were merely tactics to gain workers upon which the contractors would profit. Once the laborers arrived there was typically no way for them to return to Mexico or go elsewhere because they did not speak the language and did not have the money or resources to go elsewhere once they discovered they had been duped. The Oregon Bureau of Labor estimated the weekly earnings for a migrant family in 1958 as $84 (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008: 57). By the time housing, transportation and other fees were taken away that left the family with just $15 a week. The promise and lure of the high wages was really a lie and left most families struggling to survive. Oregon’s decline of the bracero program had more to do with Mexicans came through word of mouth references for agricultural work and also through y developed out of contractual work with agricultural businesses (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). These contractors, often former migrant workers themselves, would bring migrants to the farms through sometimes questionable recruitment tactics (2008:55). Many of the migrants of the post bracero time were in fact Tejanos, US citizens by birth and many had inhabited what the Southwest is now for as long as their family could recall. During this post bracero time of the 1950’s to the 1980’s, we see many Oregon City’s popping up as locations of settlement for Mexican and Latino workers. Independence, Woodburn and Salem in the Willamette Valley and
Nyssa, Hood River and The Dalles in Eastern Oregon all became cities with agricultural economies from which these workers eventually set up long term residences (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008 and Stephen 2007). This circular migration meant that many migrants returned home after the harvest seasons ended, or migrants went from state to state to work each harvest season. This circular migration was said to have been beneficial to all those involved, the growers-for it is them who profits from cheap labor costs and rising product costs to the consumers; to the contractors for continuing to ensure a labor supply exists, to the consumer for purchasing the products produced on the backs of migrant workers, and to the migrants themselves to whom are said to be making many times more than they would in Mexico; and even to Mexico because the wages from their laborers in Oregon were making their way back to Mexico in the form of remittances and when workers returned to their home cities and towns (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). However, by looking at Oregon’s migration in this way it glamorizes this time period in migration and looks past the global reasons for migration even back then. This circular migration however, kept workers largely connected to their homes in Mexico (2008:103).

By the 1970’s there is a ‘second’ wave of Mexican migrants and we also seen indigenous Mexicans coming into Oregon, and by the 1980’s there is a significant number of indigenous workers in Oregon’s labor pool. (Stephen 2007:86). During the 1980’s there is increasing pressure to stop the control and curb the illegal immigration in the United States. Under Ronald Reagan’s presidency in 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) came into effect with the intention of limiting undocumented migrants and curbing immigration (Gonzales 2011). The IRCA placed restrictions on immigrants coming into the country but also allowed for amnesty for people who had been in the country prior to 1982 and could prove employment
Though lowering migration was the stated intention, the IRCA actually did just the opposite. The IRCA actually created many more migrants, and this ushered in a different time period in Oregon’s migration, and the nation’s migration history. The IRCA unintentionally encouraged long term settlement, the people who were able to get amnesty, could now bring their families over and apply for them to be here legally as well (2008).

Along with the IRCA the 90’s saw several national and international policies take effect that greatly effected Mexican migration. Globalization had a firm hold on migration. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1998 criminalized undocumented migrants if they attempted to apply for residency when they were in the US (Stephen 2007). This made it more difficult for migrants to gain residency because they had to leave the country to apply without potential consequence. This act also increased the budget for the border patrols, thus increasing militarization of the border. This act made it ever more difficult and dangerous for migrants to cross into the US from Mexico and served to increase the use of coyotes as methods to get across the border and fraudulent documents (2007). These changes did not result in what the government wanted, which was to decrease undocumented migrants from entering the United States, instead it actually increased it. One of the biggest changes was that it lessened circular migration. Migrants found it harder to cross the US Mexico border, so circular migration of returning home for the off season, could not last. This created a new era of migration in which migrants began bringing their families with them and settling while undocumented (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008).

This era of Reagonomics lead to the ideas of the early 90’s about globalizing trade (Stephen 2007). Mexico had some tough agricultural seasons and the US provided them a seemingly good
option. Free trade. The North American Free Trade Agreement promised increased trade relations and eliminated tariffs on imports and exports (2008:113). This initially was said to uplift Mexico’s prosperity. Though, we know now that this decimated many of Mexico’s small scale farms and the price of agriculture within Mexico has plummeted. This trade agreement has also prompted much of the indigenous migrant migration from Mexico, because it allowed their land to be sold. NAFTA has served to spur the immigration from Mexico to the US and is one of the largest global factors (2008).

There is a heavy influx of migrants that started coming in the 1990’s and has continued (Stephen 2007). This has roots in capitalistic ventures as well as neoliberal politics. North American Free Trade Agreement both directly and indirectly affected migration from rural Mexico to the United States. With the imposition of NAFTA, small scale farms throughout Mexico were no longer able to compete with the much cheaper corn and other agriculture produced in the US (Stephen 2007 and Kingsolver 2007). NAFTA was imposed at a very strategic time. Mexico had just started reeling from the effects of a very hefty drought when the US suggested this free trade agreement between among North American nations. NAFTA was marketed as actually decreasing Mexican migration to the US, because NAFTA was supposed to attract big business investors to Mexico (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). NAFTA also opened up traditionally communal indigenous land for privatization and international sale. What has happened because of NAFTA is increased migration to the US. The business that expanded in Mexico is the multinational factories “maquiladoras” which provide extremely low wage and harsh conditions of employment (Prieto 1985). Meanwhile Mexico’s small family owned farms have largely taken a dive due to their inability to compete with the international Monsanto funded agriculture. This hastened migration to a near total loss of small scale farming in
Mexico. It was through globalization that beliefs starting spreading about the lack of prosperity and opportunity in rural Mexico (Stephen 2007).

**Making of the Migrant**

The United States prides itself on being a ‘melting pot’ of heterogeneous cultures all coming together in harmony (Gonzales 2011). The truth is that the United States does have many heterogeneous cultures that have come together, but that does not however make things harmonious. Mexicans are now the largest immigrant population in the United States (Gonzales 2008). However, Mexicans are the only ethnic population that can claim new immigration within the last 100 years as well as long term heritage in the American southwest and California (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). Lynn Stephens describes Mexican migration and settlement in and around Oregon from long before Oregon was a state or even a territory of the United States (2007). Historians and ethnographers have also been able to identify hundreds of years of Mexican migration from what is now the United States and Mexico. Mexicans make up two thirds of all the Latinos in the United States (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008).

Regardless of this ethnic history within the current territory of the United States, Mexicans have gained a status as a racialized ‘other’ (2008). Mexicans are viewed as permanent migrants, primarily because of their inability to be accepted by American society in both practice and policy (Gonzales 2008, Stephens 2007, Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008).

In broader societal discourse, migrants are characterized as the nation’s problem. In debates over national security migrants are seen as denigrating the security and promoted through the right wing media and politics as a severe threat. This can be seen right here in Oregon, with the example of the driver license bill, executive order 07-22. Passed in 2008, this bill made it illegal for anyone without legal residency in the United States to have a license in the state of Oregon.
The proponents of this bill described the need for safer roads and highways, justifying that with the idea that Mexican migrants use Oregon as a superhighway for the drug cartels (Cisneros 2014). What many thought would happen due to this bill, was that more people would drive without insurance. However, state reports show that there has been no change in the number of people driving without insurance (Cisneros 2014). Yet, migrants in Oregon are being criminalized even more through national discourses that reflect ideas that migrants are threats, (Howell Jr. 2014).

Perpetuating this discriminatory discourse about migrants actually serves the national economic interest of the United States government. As Leigh Binford states, “Restructured U.S. capitalism needs new generations of undocumented migrants to occupy slots at the bottom of the economic food chain (2003).” By perpetuating migrants as a threat to American nationalist interests we are simultaneously able to continue an entire economy based around migrants such as militarization of the border and detainment of undocumented migrants while also needing those same migrants to continue the United States agriculture (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). The United States is actually benefiting economically through this discourse surrounding migrants. The United States heavily relies on Mexican migrants to fulfill the bottom sector of the economy, which benefits the farm owners and factory owners because they are able to pay a meager wage (Binford 2003 and Kingsolver 2007). Yet, those same people who are fulfilling the agricultural sector of the US economy have had an entire economy created for them through the militarization of the border, the border guards and police in addition to the ICE detainments, as well as numerous state and national level policies which are aimed at undocumented migrants (Stephens 2007). Even when migrants send money back to Mexico in what is known as
remittances, it is not Mexico or the Mexican people who benefit. Binford argues that it is large scale U.S. capitalistic enterprises that are benefiting (2003).

While migrants are no doubt serving America’s economy in a multitude of ways they are also being viewed as the ‘drain’ on the system (Howell Jr. 2014). In health care a dominant societal discourse is that migrants do not have health insurance and therefore they are a drain on the health care system because when they get sick they cannot afford to pay for their care thus causing health care costs to rise. A recent article in the Washington Post described that congress ‘chose’ to continue allowing as they called them, illegal aliens to have health care while denying veteran’s benefits (Howell Jr. 2014). In reality, the senate did not restore a prior cut to military pensions, while simultaneously continuing to allow undocumented migrants to claim a tax benefit from Medicare (2014). The truer versions of the story are often hidden and instead the more intriguing and controversial spins are perpetuated, as happened with the veteran and migrant issues. This unfortunately perpetuates the discrimination of migrants. Migrants in these scenarios are routinely made the scapegoat by policy makers instead of looking at national and international and neoliberal forces which contribute too many legitimate problems and concerns witting health care and social services.

All of these examples serve as representations of which migrants are in contemporary United States society. These representations create a stereotype steeped in discrimination in which U.S. society has actually created an identity which has become too applied to all migrants whether they have papers or not who are now known as ‘illegal aliens’ (Howell Jr. 2014). There has also been a profound racialization of migrant workers, that all migrants are ‘Mexican’ (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008, Stephen 2007 and Holmes 2013). Thus ‘Mexican’ has come to be identified with ‘illegal.’ One can never be a ‘citizen’ if they are simultaneously illegal, so this
creates a discourse of exclusion and perpetuates violence against migrants (Bejarano 2010). This racialization has happened in relation to the history of American expansion and imperialism in which at first Mexicans were considered an enemy so that the US could gain more territory, and then later of through the bracero program many Mexicans were depicted in derogatory ways and discriminated against for the type of work they did (Gonzales 2011). Later on in later waves of migration and up to today, because of this history of racialization of Mexican migrants, all Latin American migrants regardless of nationality have come under similar scrutiny (2011).

There has been an increased sense of premise against migrant workers since the 9/11 attacks. The Al-Qaeda terrorism from across the world, has had large repercussions for not only new nationalistic policies which secure the borders, but also in creating an image of ‘the migrant’ as an illegal alien- something to be feared, and even stripping migrants of their humanity (Stephen 2007). Prior to 9/11 the Bush administration was trying to craft a policy which would allow for amnesty for undocumented migrants, but the 9/11 attacks changed the course of the nation, and the subsequent barters (Stephen 2007:147). Instead, in the years since 9/11 we have seen a strengthening of the militarized border, further dehumanization for migrants, and harsher sentences and reprimands for those who are found to be undocumented in the US. Not only are those who are undocumented affected, but so too are the migrants who are here legally, but because they are viewed by the Anglo population as a migrant, they face immense discrimination and prejudice. Through all of these prejudices, there has been a construction of the migrant as ‘illegal’ (Stephen 2007: 150). The illegal alien represents a racialized non-human who sucks the American social welfare system dry, and is a threat to all Americans on a multitude of levels. Migrants today, are not only viewed in society as a drain on society’s resources, but also as a real potential threat due to the fears ignited from the 9/11 attacks (Stephens 2007). While this notion
that migrants are draining the system economically is not true, it helps to reinforce the economies that can only be sustained through this circular logic of simultaneously needing migrants as farm labor and also wanting them gone.

**Competing subjectivities as both migrant and child:**

Child migrants complicate this societal discourse on migrants particularly as ‘illegal.’ The western views of the child interact with the societal depictions of migrants and illegal aliens. Migrant subjectivities and child subjectivism are at odds with one another. To be both a child and a migrant then is incompatible in the United States discourses surrounding child and migrant. To be a migrant, one must have agency to freely decide to be in a locale or to move from place to place; a child does not have that. Instead, children are controlled and cared for at all times. To be a migrant, is to be under suspicion at all times and a drain on the system. (Stephen 2007). Whereby, a child is the essence of innocence, therefore there would be no need to be suspicious of children, because children are incapable of doing real harm, according to the western ideals of childhood (Duschinsky 2013 and Horton 2008). Also, children are supposed to be cared for by adults, so they are not a drain on the system but in fact it is our privilege and our responsibility to take care of them because after all they are our future. These are just some examples of how migrants have been seen in the US and how children are seen in the US. They simply do not fit together. So what then, does this mean for migrant children? Are they children first and take on the characteristics of children and childhood? Or are they migrants first and take on the prejudices and stereotypes that come with that? How might these people who don’t neatly fit into a box of stereotyped American ideals actually belong or feel they belong in the United States, when there is no set mold for them to fall into.
Although, children have now been much removed from the market economy by way of waged labor, there is one area where children are still legally able to work without many restrictions which is in agriculture (Zelizer 1985). There were no laws in the United States restricting children from working in agriculture at all until 1966, which set basic standards for children working in agriculture. By 1974, an age limit was set which require children to be 12 years old to work in agriculture, and a maximum of 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, and not during school hours (Zelizer 1985). This is important for child migrants, because this is one area where being a migrant and a child are not in so much competition for subjectivity. Although, most of the children in this study do not work with their parents in agriculture, the idea that they could, and that their parents work is actually an accepted space according to the state and federal policies has important symbolism. Thus agricultural work is one space where children who are migrants seem to be more in line with each other. Thus within agriculture at least, the migrant and the child are not polar opposites.

The DREAM act is an example of a national policy that has, albeit inadvertently, pitted the child against the migrant for child migrants (Zimmerman 2011). The DREAM act was a bill that was around for over ten years before finally being passed in congress which essentially promoted that migrants who are undocumented and came to the USA as young children, should be able to stay in the country without fear of deportation (Zimmerman 2011). However, this still does not grant a path to citizenship. Within the bill there are numerous stipulations that describe inclusion and exclusion criteria for these child migrants. Subjective variables such as grades and character, or whether or not you are deemed a ‘good person’ all factor into whether or not you will have a path to citizenship. People who were against this bill tried to highlight the fact that the DREAMERS are not just children but that they are ‘illegal immigrants’ (Aguirre and
Simmers 2012). Thus the migrant status is the primary way to view these children. This can have huge ramifications on belonging and identity. Thereby the US government is essentially saying because you are a migrant you lose any chance of protection and care normally allocated to people who are ‘children.’ Only certain children can receive rights as children.

These competing westernized identities of ‘the child’ and ‘the migrant’ serve to complicate how child migrants today might be able to understand where they fit in, in this society. While children are supposed to be ‘the future,’ migrants are supposed to cease to exist.
3. Literature Review of Relevant Research on Child Migration

Introduction

With all of the state and national interest directed at children which labels them as the nation’s future or our future, one would think that child migrant voices and their own subjectivities would be a big topic for researchers. That perhaps, those that will become of prime importance in our nation’s history or world history may also then have something of importance to add the world now. However, this is not the case because children are viewed as ‘human becomings’ and not human beings who have valid ideas and concepts of their own to add to society (Katz 2008). Certainly child migrants complicate this as well, because childhood is something that is supposed to be built around stability, not goings and comings and in between-ness (Katz 2004). It is not difficult to understand then, that most of the research about child migrants is in regards to how they might become more stable, or how they are transitioning into more stability. Child migrants have certainly been focused on in social science, but rarely as active social actors and in terms of their own ideas and thoughts. They have been the focus of multitudes of studies particularly in relation to their educational attainment, the perceived level of assimilation and acculturation and how they behave as the cultural mediators for their families (Grindling 2012, Hamm, Brown and Heck 2005, Portes and Rivas 2011, Simpkins, Vest and Price 2011). Many of these studies focused on the parents and simply saw the children as markers of American success or failure depending on if the children were doing well or poorly in school or if they were getting into trouble or not. These studies rarely ask the children’s opinions or seek answers from the children themselves. Migrant children are often depicted in research as ‘victims of migration’ as is usually the case when scholars discuss child migrants as refugees or asylum seeking (Sirriyeh 2010, Eastmond and Ascher 2011) Child migrants are also often looked at in terms of ‘how’
integrated they are in a host society, as opposed to their subjective experiences (Portes and Rivas 2011). It is more about the researcher’s own questioning of how much these children fit into the American culture or how they are doing in school. Researchers in education are mostly concerned with migrant children’s level of success in school settings or more generally with integration and assimilation into US culture. These questions, fit very nicely into the nationalistic discourse about the US being a melting pot of cultures, and that when migrants come to the US, they begin taking on the values and traditions of the US, while leaving their own behind. Child migrants actually complicate the ideals of assimilation and integration, when their voices are allowed to be heard (Horton 2008 and Hutchins 2011).

This very profound lack of research on child migrants as active social actors in their own right has led to a hole in the literature on the population of this study. This literature review of child migrants looks at symbolic articles which utilize child centered methods to study children, and they all attempt to use children’s own voices to show children as competent social actors.

**Places and Emplacement of Child Migrants**

Gardner and Mind studied Bangladeshi migrant children living in London with a qualitative participatory arts based method (2012). The children involved in this research were born in Britain but mobile across place and time. Places were experienced physically and are embedded the lives of the children as both physical location and a social importance. Home and away often turned out to be the same place. Gardner and Mind use the idea of emplacement to describe children in different contexts (2012). Emplacement allows us to see the power relationships to and how children are socially placed within society. Emplacement depends upon how childhood is constructed as well as ethnicity, gender, class act (2012). In emplacement neither the local nor global can be unbound from each other and emplacement results from global process and
processes within the local community and family. Emplacement is different for children due to differing social contexts (2012). Emplacement occurs for all children and is governed by the relationships children have to governing structures within a society, such as ethnicity, gender, class, which contains elements which are local and global governing process (2012). Children’s place in society therefore is largely due to their emplacement within the society, which is catered to due to these local and global governing forces. Cindi Katz’ notion of vagabond capitalism in which children are being unequally disadvantaged in some groups because of production is largely mobile but social reproduction is largely place bound (2001). This means that certain groups of children are being pushed farther to the periphery and ‘marooned.’

Places were also experienced by children in Gardner and Mind’s study in terms of social relationships and practices (2012). Places are social because people were located within place and in national and global hierarchies. In drawing circles of relatedness, the British-Bangladeshi children drew themselves in the center then relatives in both London and Bangladesh very close to them. Places were remembered as intensely physical. Bodily perceptions can help place belonging (2012).

When asked what they liked best about Bangladesh many children said that they liked the shopping malls which showed their inclination to consume and power as a consumptive citizen (Gardner and Mind 2012). The children do not themselves make a clear distinction as to where they belong, instead what emerged was that both physical locations were actually apart of the same social field. Physical places may well not be considered an actual different place but a part of one place (2012).

Governance of Child Migrants
In another study that was done with Bangladeshi child migrants, Theresa Hutchins dives into assumptions about what is good for the family is good for the children and how this may not be true and instead is a ploy to just ignore the children’s voices (2011). The dominant frameworks for understanding children assume that there is a unidirectional flow of culture and information from the parents to the children. This can result in creating a ‘mechanized’ child and notion of childhood in which institutions manufacture social adults. Hutchins discusses the idea that children are actually at the center of the family migration, and act with agency to direct their lives (2011).

Hutchins describes the notion of ‘generational structuring’ is a way for both parents and children to position themselves in response to the other (2011:1228). *Childing* is the adult positioning themselves in relation to the child and *adulting* is when the child is able to position themselves in relation to the parent (2011). This plays a part in the hierarchy and power relationships. Practically, this is employed with and during decisions to migrate, the migration process.

**Global Constructions of the Migrant Child**

Eastmond and Asher did research with refugee children in Sweden who are caught up in interplay of government policy and actual practice (2011). This article looks at the construction of refugee children in Sweden and how restrictive asylum policies can imply serious risks for children. Refugee children are often framed ambiguously as victims or untrustworthy, similar to constructions of migrant children. The asylum seeking children are framed within a tension between policy and practice, the child is a category which is seen as highly vulnerable but also highly valuable (2011: 1186). Sweden has marketed itself as promoting children’s rights, yet
they have been rejecting children for asylum in great numbers. Asylum seeking children seem to
embody the contradictions of the receiving country, in this case Sweden (2011).

The suffering bodies of the children manifest the power of the state over non-citizens in its
territory (2011). This is very interesting in relating to ‘illegal’ alien children in the US. Could
the poor health and the poor school results be due to the poor treatment by the US government?
Could the child migrants be the vehicles through which the US shows their power and prejudice
over others people infiltrating their land? The Swedish government placed the problem back on
the children and the family structure (2011). This is not all that unlike the discourse surrounding
the faltering economy which lays blame on migrants for taking all the welfare and health care.

The children in Sweden were recognized as ‘objects of assistance’ without recognizing their
competent and subjective beings (2011).

**Belonging for Child Migrants**

Karen Fog Olwig’s study of “Children’s Places of Belonging in Immigrant Families of
Caribbean background” lays a good foundation for this thesis. Fog Olwig specifically was
interested in how children of immigrant backgrounds create their own ‘ties’ and places of
belonging reflected in their daily lives (2003:217). Her study focused on children’s experiences
into what they deem as places of belonging. The children in her study were of Caribbean descent
and lived in Canada. Fog Olwig concluded that the children saw belonging existing for them on
local, global, and national levels which all affected their lives. She saw this in primarily younger
children before they “became constricted by the multicultural or ethnic structure of wider society
(Fog Olwig 2003).” Fog Olwig argues that the policies of the nation, teach the children which
places are to be their primary places of belonging (2003). Because these children were ethnically
different than the majority, the broader culture taught them that they should primarily identify as
their ethnic nationality. Fog Olwig found that the children were situated between multiple places of belonging (2003).

On a state level, belonging is recognized through specific measures and characteristics. Assimilation and acculturation are the methods to become integrated into society (Portes and Rivas 2011 and Portes 2008). Assimilation and acculturation are deeply connected to the idea that migrants are integrating into the United States in certain ways according to their generation (Portes and Rivas 2011). First generation migrants are people who migrated from their home country into the United States. Second generation migrants are the children of those that migrated and third generation are the grandchildren of the first generation (Portes and Rivas 2011, Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2008). The first generation migrants are supposedly the least assimilated. They usually do not speak English, and they retain many ties to their home culture (Portes and Rivas 2011). The second generation is more assimilated in the sense that they likely speak English and have taken on many more ‘American’ cultural traits, while losing some of their parents’ home culture traits. The third generation is usually seen as fully integrated (Gonzales 2011). There are many different theoretical models for assimilation but the dominant characteristics of assimilation are that migrants gradually lose their home culture and gain the American culture (Portes and Rivas 2011). There is also a generation called the one and a half, which is between first and second generation (Gonzales-Berry, Mendoza and Plaza 2006). The one and a half generation migrants are people who have been brought to the United States by their parents or other adults between the ages of 5 and 15 (2006). The generations create divides and boundaries for belonging for migrants.
4. Literature Review of Relevant Theoretical Directions

**Vagabond Capitalism**

Vagabond capitalism is the idea that capitalism has huge amounts of global production which ultimately detaches with place and social reproduction (Katz 2001). This creates a point of disjuncture where production is no longer attached to social reproduction, which causes people to struggle to attain social reproduction due to limited material commodities and social commodities associated with social reproduction (2001). Social reproduction encompasses all things that it takes to produce daily and long term life. This includes reproduction of the labor force quite literally, as well as cultural and social practices and norms (2001). Social reproduction, prior to the neoliberal regime had support from the state and thus also from capital in the forms of social welfare safeguards, worker benefits, children’s school activities and all other things that might aid in community and cultural exchanges between people (2001). When neoliberal policies started taking hold social reproduction became estranged from the role of the state or capital, and instead social reproduction was put into the hands of individuals, families and other private entities (Katz 2001). Vagabond capitalism is essentially a non-bound global capitalism in which profits are paramount and people are pushed to the periphery. It is under the capitalistic market which houses the projects of neoliberalism and modernity (2001).

**Globalization**

Globalization can be described as “processes of change simultaneously generating centrifugal (as the territory of the nation-state) and centripetal (supra-national nodes) forces that result in deterritorialization of basic, economic, social and cultural practices from their traditional mooring in the nation-state (Suarez-Orozco 2003).” Or more simply put as “detaching social practices and social formations from their traditional moorings in bounded (often national)
territories (2003).” Globalization disrupts pieces that were once all considered parts of a whole entity, that being nations. This in itself brings with it a multitude of problems, however, for the most part we can agree that globalization detaches things that were once mostly place bound and that globalization is heftily increasing along with onset of neoliberalization and the projects of modernity (Harrison 2007). Thus globalization is inherent in both neoliberalism and modernity functioning as the vehicle of global expansion.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is predominantly an economic system of the last thirty years that has restructured capitalism which encourage a maximization of profit in the capitalist market over the wellbeing of citizens primarily carried out on a global scale of which the effects are heavily felt on a local scale (Katz 2004 and Kingsolver 2007). Neoliberalism takes many things out of the hands of the state and national responsibility and puts it into the hand of private businesses whose goal is capital accumulation (Binford 2003). This has resulted in a vast reduction of social services and broadening of inequity and inequality. This encompasses a whole plethora of economic, social, political policies which typically involve privatization of public entities or consolidation of smaller businesses, companies or institutions into corporate run entities. One of the policies that best represents neoliberals is the North American Free Trade Organization or NAFTA. NAFTA represents a policy that is ‘global’ which affects both Mexico and the US rural farmers quite substantially while benefiting large scale multinational corporations (Kingsolver 2007). While the influx of multinational factories to the border states of Mexico also represents neoliberalization of once nation bound business, which in turn separates production from those that then consume it and from reproduction (Katz 2004). Neoliberalism is intimately connected to globalization. Both of these entities result in marginalization and
inequity due to the flow of capital from the global south to the global north and the flow of ideas and values from the global north to the global south (Kingsolver 2007 and Binford 2003).

Chandra Mohanty argues that the neoliberal structuring of the world builds barriers and holds all people, but especially women, hostage to oppression (2003). Substituting children in place of women, we can see the oppression that children face as well. Mohanty describes the oppressive forces of the neoliberal world, “Global capital in racialized and sexualized guise destroys the public spaces of democracy, and quietly sucks power out of the once social/public spaces of nation states. Corporate capitalism has redefined citizens as consumers- and global markets replace the commitments to economic, sexual, and racial equality (2003:235).”

Mohanty describes global flows of knowledge and action as incredibly oppressive on a local level to all people and as embedded into women’s very bodies and minds. It is important to remember that neoliberalism enhances inequality, thus racism, classism, sexism and now also childism (discrimination based on being a child) should all be considered as a trait within the neoliberal project.

Mohanty’s analysis is important to understand how one might craft belonging in a neoliberal world. Neoliberalism’s components, globalization and capitalist are the perpetrators of this misogyny (2003). For Mexican child migrants, Mohanty’s ideas are especially pertinent. There is a lack of emphasis on economic, sexual and racial equality in the capitalist world views (2003). Child migrants will be negotiating belonging within a highly racist, highly sexist locale. This may seem as a bit of a contradiction, because of popular lore perpetuates the belief that women are in fact liberated by coming to the United States from Mexico. Child migrants will also be framing their belongings within the context of racist and sexist discourse as well as within the capitalist economy. Neoliberalism, due the emphasis on capital accumulation, also
puts more emphasis on individuals becoming consumers. Self-worth and belonging may be placed within the realm of how good of a consumer one might be.

**Modernity**

Modernity began after industrialization. It is founded upon the ideals of rational thought and western culture. All types of progress after industrialization have been viewed as modern. Modernity then is founded upon the ability to judge the modern against some sort of ‘other,’ inherently creating difference (Hodgson 2001). All non-western nations are said to not be modern, or are in the process of modernization. Thus modernity creates and perpetuates a binary system (Anglin and Lamere 2007). Things which are modern are civilized, clean, new and high tech. Things which are non-modern are uncivilized, old, dirty and outdated. Thus there is a real danger when the western world claims certain things to be modern, while others are not, which in essence is creating a hierarchical division.

Mary Beth Mill discusses young Thai migrant women’s negotiations with modernity, gender and their own youth (2001). These young Thai women choose to migrate to urban areas in an attempt to gain an experience of modernity. The desire of the youth Thai women for migration is purposeful to create a type of lifestyle which typifies what they believe to be modern (2001). Modern is this sense is the ability to consume and purchasing power. However, it is clearly impossible that these young Thai migrants will ever gain the type of modernity that they want. The social imaginary of modernity sees it as a liberating force that each individual person can create for themselves and something from which people can live freely and happily next to their consumerism and urban lifestyles (2001). The idea of individual choice is important because this is central to the control tactics of the global capitalism. By promoting modernity as an individual choice, it makes failures and successes purely due to a person’s own ability or talents (Mills
This disfigures and hides the oppressing structure of society. The importance of modernity to the lives of youth Mexican migrants is that youth Mexican migrants are also subject to these strong social imaginaries that shape modernity as the only way of living. The idea of being a modern person or striving for modernity is an unrealistic and unattainable characteristic of an ideal life.

**Transborder**

In today’s globalized world of vagabond capitalism, people who migrate have to cross nation-states but they also cross a myriad of various other ‘borders’ both within the receiving nation and outside of it such as regional boundaries, sometimes ethnic, cultural and gender boundaries (Stephen 2007). The idea here, called transborder, is that migrants who move from one nation state to another are going to be continually engaging in aspects across different ‘borders,’ which help create meanings and methods of inclusion and exclusion in their lives (2007). Lynn Stephens argues that this framework is appropriate for indigenous Oaxacans who migrant in ‘newer’ migrant chains to Oregon, though have a differential migration history than non-indigenous Mexican migrants (2007). Transborder encompasses the boundaries crossed by migrants, which are not simply national boundaries. Stephens argues that migrants today face boundaries such as regional, ethnic and cultural, and the migrants are constantly negotiating, crossing and reinventing these borders (2007). The idea of transborder occupies a new way to view migrant subjectivities as opposed to seeing them primarily bound to the nation-state. Instead of viewing Mexican migrants as inhabiting a transnational space where they are bound to their home nation and their receiving nation, Stephen argues to view migrants in terms of a transborder experience in which migrants simultaneously navigate nation-state borders, cultural
borders, racial and ethnic borders and importantly the flow of multi-directional information transmission.

This framework is incredibly relevant for Mexican child migrants, though they will face differing borders from the indigenous migrants that Stephens frames her work around. A predominant border in which these children face is the idea of childhood itself. While these children are consistently asked to do things, which are outside the realm of the western stereotype of what children should be doing, these children navigate this in similar ways that Stephen describes migrants navigating national, regional, cultural, ethnic and class borders. With the additional burden of childhood borders lay the institutions which are foundational to children’s lives. This study will be able to use the concept of transborder to frame the children’s experiences as that of actively crossing borders showing them as active social actors within a globalized world.

**Belonging**

The issues surrounding how migrant children understand and feel they belong is central to this project. In this project, belonging is about the lived experiences of attachments to people, places and things, and also about longings and yearnings for belonging (White, Ni Laoire, Carpena-Mendez and Tyrrell 2011). Belonging is vital to this project because it showcases a deeper understanding than just identity can allow for. Power dynamics and modes of social inclusion and exclusion are things that we can understand through exploring how these children understand and feel that they belong. Belonging can be defined in relation to identity, “as a concept that captures more accurately the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than the
positing of identity as a stable state (White, Ni Laoire and Carpena-Mendez 2011:7).” Belonging thus is able to encapsulate the local and the global understandings in a globalized age. Fog Olwig suggests that the locations of being both sending and receiving may not be the sites of belonging, but that the interconnectedness of other areas of their life may also be sites of belonging. Their lives may be both local and global, gendered, and institutionalized (2003).

Transborder is thus also an important in understanding and dissecting belonging because it breaks down perceptions of migrants’ worlds as simply transnational (implying migrant worlds and subjectivities are founded in two locale). In searching for how these children belong, I hope to provide a deeper analysis of what migrants negotiate on a day to day basis, showing that migrants do not live in simply in a bi-national or bi-cultural negotiation, but they negotiate and cross many other borders every single day (Stephen 2007). Belonging, therefore, becomes a part of a framework in which migrants are negotiating, recreating and transforming. The many borders of which transborder encompasses become methods in which these child migrants may or may not belong, or feel they belong (2007).
5. Methods

Introduction

This project is an ethnographic qualitative research project which utilizes many classical anthropological methods. However, this project diverges from more classical anthropology in its treatment and understanding of children in ethnographic research. In most social science studies which utilize children as participants, children are rarely seen as fully incorporated citizens and instead are seen more as ‘human becoming’ (Gardner 2012). In other words, this means that children are typically used in research as examples of purity, innocence, the essence of the human experience, and not active, capable social actors which respond and react to their social world. This section will begin with discussing methodology of doing research with children.

Child Centered Methods

I have attempted to use the methodology of what Zeitlyn calls, “child centered” in my research (2012). Research that is child centered should foremost create an environment in which the research is with children, rather than on them. Child centered approach to research also means, involving the children as much as possible in the research which can mean many things such as allowing children to create questions and to influence or even develop search design (Zeitlyn, 2012). In a child centered approach where the children are only able to be the participants, the researchers should focus on the insights from the children’s own views and actions. Children researcher, Sonja Grover argues that child centered research is about giving children the power to be active participants in the research process instead of simply ‘objects of study’ (2004). An active participant in this sense means that the children who are in the study are allowed to tell their own story in their own words, in each child’s unique and varied way. Allison James cautions childhood researchers by explaining, “There is a fine line between presenting children’s
accounts of the world and the claim to be able to see the world from the child’s perspective as a new kind of “truth” (James 2007).” We as childhood researchers must take great care to not create an exotified other out of the children that participate in research. As anthropologists who study children we need to attempt to present children’s experiences and perspectives of their social world but remain cautious that we are not nor will we ever be able to view the world as our child participants do (Holmes 1998).

Zeitlyn also argues that in doing a child centered research project that the adults who are a part of the children’s lives must then also be a part of the child centered research (2012). This is because children everywhere are for the most part governed by the adults in their lives and the adults play active roles in the kid’s everyday lives, so we as child centered researchers must also work to actively include the adults in the research of children. It is vital as a part of child centered approach with children to study the adults in the children’s lives partly to understand the daily power structure that is at work in children’s lives. Children deal with hierarchy’s every single day and it is important to understand how these children negotiate the power structures playing out in their everyday lives. Child centered approach pushed for understanding children holistically as whole people instead of as not-quite-adults.

Zeitlyn pushes for child centered researchers to not characterize children as a “different tribe” from that of their parents or other adults around them (2012). Children are a part of the culture they are raised in. It is important to recognize their agency and to realize they are a social product as well. By understanding that children are not of a different tribe within their social world, Zeitlyn argues that most methods of studying children as opposed to adults should not be different (2012). Children are often seen in research as incompetent communicators, but in fact that is not the case. Zeitlyn argues children are often times better at communicating than adults.
Our methods for studying children do not need to be dramatically altered by preconceived notions that children are inherently different than adults. Methods can definitely be expanded upon in ways that allow children more agency in research. Zeitlyn suggests one way is to invite children to make questions or to ask questions of the researchers (2012). Each research project with children will be different but one of the fundamentals of a child centered approach is to try and find ways that children can capture their own experience (Punch, 2012). In Zeitlyn’s own research with transnational child migrants she found it was appropriate to try and fit into the child’s world. Zeitlyn sometimes took on the role of the ‘teacher’ because this was a socially accepted role that the children would have expected her to occupy. Zeitlyn knew she could not fit in with the children as a child, so she fit in with them as part of what they saw as a normal role for an adult, which allowed her to more easily blend into their life. Ultimately, a child centered approach according to Zeitlyn is about understanding the children as a unique cultural group and understanding how as a researcher to interest them.

In *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*, Myra Bluebond-Langner’s approach to ethnographic research lay in the hands of the children participants (1978). Bluebond-Langer studied children who had cancer and most were in fact dying. This was a very interesting group to analyze because the dying children break the mold of what children should be. Children should not die because children have their whole ‘life ahead of them,’ and children are preparing for the future. Bluebond-Langer explored these seemingly unknown worlds. Through her work she discovered very valuable methods to use with children. Bluebond-Langer was cautious to allow the children to always have the upper hand in the relationship between her the children. The children were free to voice what they wanted to have heard. Bluebond-Langner went to great lengths to ensure that the children felt as equal as possible to her. The inherent power
inequalities between the hospital staff and the children made it so that the voice of children was
totally silenced, which Bluebond-Langner believes is part of the socialization of dying children.

Bluebond-Langner was able to gain the trust of these kids through always allowing the
children to initiate any interaction with her, and also by being honest with the children (1978).
Prior to entering any child’s hospital room, she would ask the child if she could come-in
regardless of if the parent had already invited her. It was the child who made the decision each
day to either allow her into their room or deny it. Bluebond-Langer was also very frank with the
children about who she was and why she was there (1978). She told the children she was an
anthropologist who studies children and that she was interested in them. After the initial
introduction Bluebond-Langer would simply do whatever the children were doing, such as
watching TV, coloring, but always only if the children asked her to do so. She would never start
a conversation. If she had a conversation with a child it was because the child initiated it.
Bluebond-Langer did not have questions or interview guidelines. Instead, the topics the children
wanted to talk about became relevant to her research because it was important to the children.
All of these strategies create beneficial methodologies in attempting to do research with children.

The idea of children’s voices according to Allison James fall victim to the “pitfalls of
authenticity (2008).” This means that even though researchers may have direct quotations,
children’s voices are subject to alteration by the researcher purely because they are the ones
organizing the quotes of the children. This can sometimes lead to de-contextualization of the
voices of children creating potential problems with any ethnography involving children.
Alternatively, Bluebond-Langner did not even use exact quotations (1978). She used a theatrical
play-like dialogue that she constructed out of her field work and interviews with the children.
Therefore, by not using the exact words of children it is difficult to question the authenticity of the voices of the children.

The questions asked of this study also determine how authenticity of voices will be used. Bluebond-Langner asked, “How terminally ill children come to know they are dying when no one tells them (1978),” Furthermore, she explored why the children continued to behave in socially acceptable ways even in the face of death (1978). These questions alone dictate how the authenticity of children’s voice will be used, which is one of the reasons that I chose to research question of belonging because it allows for less leading questions as opposed to identity. The information gained from the children is used to answer those specific questions. The process of understanding how these children contribute to the social world is left to be answered by the questions asked. In attempting to do child centered research, it is vital for researchers to allow flexibility in research questions and questions in order to attempt to gain the most authentic version of how children contribute to their social world. In other words, researchers own views and biases as an adult already serve to cloud the authenticity of children’s voices through the fact that we as researchers are the ones instigating the topics and questions (Punch 2012 and Zeitlyn 2012). As researchers, and as adults, we will always be in this overcast situation. Our best solution to this problem is to be aware and try to make our research questions as flexible as possible. It is important to tailor methods to children not because they are children but because they are cultural social actors just like the adults in their world.

**Researcher bias**

As any good researcher should, I need to make my own biases known and be self-reflexive so that I might hope to better analyze my data. Though I am most definitely an outsider, I am also a bit of an insider. I have worked in the fields when I was much younger with my dad during
harvest. Though, as I grew older I no longer came to harvests, I did continue every so often in coming to my dad’s place of work and either visiting with him, or coming with him at other times to various farms. Thus I have known Ramon, who became the gatekeeper for this thesis, for many years. My toddler nephew, Jake, played on a number of occasions with Adriana and Emmanuel. My father who worked with Artemio and his wife become friends with them. Jake had accompanied Grandpa (my father) a few times to barbecues and other festivities around their home. Another time they all went to the local fair together where all the children enjoyed the kiddie rides and fireworks. Because of my dad’s connection with Artemio and his family, I knew them and saw them in passing on several occasions. They knew me as Ted’s daughter. The other people who so graciously agreed to take part in this study did not know me prior to fieldwork. However, because the farms are relatively small and most of the farm workers know one another quite well throughout this area, my participants all knew who I was prior to meeting me.

Although I had the benefit of insider introductions, I was still very much an outsider because I was neither Mexicana nor a farm worker, and a young adult female. However, having the privilege of ‘being known’ without really knowing the other farm workers gave me a unique insider’s perspective on migrant farm workers and their children today. This is a rare vantage point that few researchers can breach, and this is partly why my participants were collectively few in number thereby rationalizing the importance of completing a qualitative ethnography as opposed to a quantitative study requiring a large amount of participants.

Methodology

The methods utilized for this study were drawn from the qualitative ethnographic approach as an appropriate methodology largely due to the limited number of available participants, as well
as my unusual researcher advantage accessing entry to a hard to reach group utilizing primarily participant observation as well as semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

**Participant Observation**

This classic anthropological method was the primary method used in this study. As a classical anthropological method, participant observation is about totally immersing yourself in your participant’s culture and attempting to view their world through their eyes in hopes of articulating that experience into a meaningful account of people’s livelihoods. This method was ideal for this study partly because it is foundational to cultural anthropology but also because of the population which who I researched. Participant observation is used to provide rich information about participant’s daily lives (Bernard 2009). Participant observation is a method in which the researcher tries to get as close to those being researched in organic settings as possible. This is usually accomplished by the researcher living in the culture or society as those they are researching or simply spending time with the research participants in their everyday lives. The researcher’s role in participant observation is to be as much of a backdrop and natural part of their participant’s lives as possible, so that the researcher may gain an understanding of the research questions from the participant’s point of view (Bernard 2009). Bernard describes one of the benefits of participant observation as experiential knowledge which is having the ability to “talk convincingly from the gut” about your research participants lives because the researcher has been able to gain, however small, a meaningful firsthand account of the participant’s world (2009). The data collected from participant observation is usually qualitative, and for this project it was purely qualitative. Participant observation allows the researcher the freedom to be able to interact with participants on an intimate level at the participant’s desire for and degree of proximity to their world. In this way, the participants are more in control of the
research because they are actively either allowing or disallowing the researcher to enter and exit their spaces (Bernard 2009).

Participant observation is an ideal method to study groups of people that are seen as vulnerable or that are hard to find. Since participant observation occurs in the participants own everyday environment, sometimes that can be less fearful than having to go outside of their normal daily lives. Individuals are able to forge connections with one another through participant observation and this leads to trust (Bernard 2009). Trust is inherent in participant observation. Particularly with migrant farm workers who have the burden of being under near constant surveillance from wider society’s suspicions of them, and at the same time trying to remain invisible under this aura of scrutiny, they are simply not going to allow someone to come in to their everyday live without some level of trust.

Hard to find groups are also an ideal group in which to use participant observation. The researcher follows the participant in participant observation, so as long as the researcher knows where one group of people is or knows the gatekeepers. We can utilize participant observation to understand groups of people who are hard to find. Child migrants are most certainly a group that is hard to find and hard to access. Not only are children vulnerable, but migrants are inherently vulnerable particularly because of society’s stereotyping and discrimination of them. Children are often seen in research as being extremely vulnerable. Participant observation allows researchers to come into contact with children’s worlds in ways that any other type of research just cannot.

Participant observation is vital in this particular research context also because the research question about how child migrants experience belonging simply cannot be accessed through traditions means, such as questionnaires or interviews alone. Infiltrating children’s worlds and
activities they do every day is vital in understanding how children craft their own understandings of belonging. Particularly because there is such a lack of focus even within migration and transnational studies of child migrants and especially of child migrants everyday lives. Participant observation is a valid method to gain a general understanding of parts of their lives. Participant observations occurred with both the child migrants and the parents of the child migrants. The participant observation occurred at the work places of the parents. Because their work places were agricultural fields throughout the Willamette Valley, the participant observation was primarily either in barns, workshops or outside in the fields. The parents rarely allowed the children to be completely out of sight or hearing range, particularly because of the age of the children who were taken to these particular fields. With the child migrants, I was at first a complete observer but rather quickly I became a participant observer. A complete observer is when the researcher is simply observing the participants and unable to participate in their daily rituals. A participant observer is when the researcher is an outsider but able to participate in some parts of their participants’ lives and record data through field notes (Bernard 2009). Though at first the children were a bit leery of me, most of them became more comfortable with me quite quickly. In the words of one little girl, “your kind of a kid, but not” which was in reference to my willingness to play with them. I was quickly invited to participate in games with them. Although I was still regarded as an adult, I was able to fit in through my role as an adult, and also through my networking and mutually associating with the same people that they know. Often times, I would eat with the children while their parents worked. Other times I would just sit back and listen to them or watch them draw. I started out with a spiral notebook of normal college ruled size. I realized quickly that this was actually detrimental to my ability to take notes, but it was extremely beneficial to me connecting with the children. Thus
my notebook itself became a method. On the first day of my field work I had a red spiral notebook, which was mostly empty. Emmanuel wanted to know what I was doing. I explained to him that I was writing down all the things I was learning about. He and his sister were very interested in this and he had the idea to use my notebook for things he wanted to use it for. From that day on, I realized I at least needed to bring multiple pens so that the kids would be able to write or draw and so would I. On days where we were outside, sometimes the notebook was totally worthless because the air was so moist and cold, or it was flat out raining that it was nearly impossible to write coherent notes. But again the children found a use for my notebook. They saw it as rain guards for their heads, or a new way to communicate by all using the notebook to write things to each other. The parents though, when they could, disallowed such behavior. The parents were always present throughout the participant observation.

Participant observation with the parents of the child migrants was less involved than that of their children. Since my prime purpose was to understand the children’s worlds, understandably I wanted to spend most of my time with the children. However, as childhood researchers have noted, we cannot take out adults from children’s lives if we expect to understand children’s normal everyday lives because the adults are inherently a part of their children’s lives. Also, because the children and adult were in the same location at almost all times throughout the participant observation, the participant observation of both the adults and children overlapped dramatically. I mainly tried to follow what the kids did and were doing, but in doing so, I inherently also followed the parents because that is what the kids did. There were a few times however, where I specifically left the area where the children were to join the adults. One particular instance was when a mother of two young migrant children was painting a room, and she had placed the children in an adjacent room. She could still hear the children, but could not
see them at all time. I specifically spent some time with the mother during that time partly to
gain a reputable status as an adult with the children, so that I was not thought of as being weirdly
fixated on them alone. In that particular instance, it was a matter of gut feeling more than
anything. I felt the children were slightly uncomfortable with my presence, so I left to be with
their adult. This did in fact seem to revitalize their trust of me, and when it came time for lunch
the children appeared happy to see me again and I went back to the room the children were in for
the rest of that day.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used for the College Assistant Migrant Program participants
who are the young adult migrants’ active participants in this study. Semi-structured interviews
offer flexibility for both the participant and the interviewer for the direction of the interview
(Bernard 2009). The research directs the general topic of the interview with pre-planned
purposeful interview questions and can redirect the interview at any time. The young adult
migrants were asked to think back to their childhood when answering the interview questions.
These two participants offered a unique perspective that affirmed many of the things learned
from the child migrants themselves, but it also offered more ambiguity. Between the two young
adult migrants, I conducted three in depth interviews between them. Two interviews were done
with Olivia and one was done with Melissa. Olivia’s interviews lasted a combined six hours,
while Melissa’s interview lasted roughly two and a half hours. These interviews took place on
the Oregon State University Campus at the location of each participants choosing. For one
interview with Olivia, she chose to be in a high traffic area of a common gathering center. Both
other interviews were conducted in locations with ample privacy.

**Unstructured Interviewing**
Unstructured interviewing was used for the child migrants and their parents. Unstructured interviews are a key tool of ethnographic field work. This interview style allows for very open-ended response from participants and is designed to allow people to open up to the interviewer. There is often no formal list of questions, just clear ideas of what needs to be discussed (Barnard 2009). This style of interviewing is great for use with children and marginalized populations because of the flexibility and potential for openness. Though informal interviewing does not have a formal list of questions, I did create some questions which helped to guide the general topic of conversation, and I asked many of these questions throughout participant observation. However, they were meant as a thematic guide not a coherent list of questions. The interviews were very flexible and cannot be described in length of time because they occurred naturally and spontaneously throughout field work. When it was necessary and appropriate I would ask questions.

Both the questions created for the child migrants and for the young adult migrants, were created from a review of the literature on child migrants and understandings of belonging and also of child centered methods which encourages viewing children uniquely because they are active social actors, not due to their status as children.

Research participants

Sampling

Recruitment for this study consisted predominantly of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used often in studies of hard to find population, intensive and critical case studies and in pilot studies (Bernard 2009). This study had a hard to find population and it involved interviews and participant observation, similar to case studies.
For the young adult migrants, I approached the OSU College Assistant Migrant Program about the possibility of having access to their CAMP students for my research. As I had already been working with OSU’s CAMP all school year as both a tutor and leading weekly meetings with former CAMP members who are now mentoring the incoming CAMP class, I was known to the CAMP staff and they agreed. I created an email to go out to all former and current OSU CAMP members that advertised the study. From this process seven people responded who was interested in the study, of those seven, two ended up in interviews. As a side note, I thought I would get more response from the people I knew in CAMP, and from people who knew of me which are the current CAMP class and the mentors of the current CAMP class. Ironically, everyone who displayed interest and both the young women who participated did not know me at all.

For the child migrants and their parents, the recruitment was through personal networks. Since my dad had worked in agriculture, I had various connections to people throughout the Willamette Valley. Ramon became the gate keeper for this thesis. I had known him for quite some time and he had become a family friend. At the beginning of this project, I was lucky enough to run into Ramon and we exchanged information. Though I had previously thought about contacting him, his phone no longer worked, which brings to light an interesting methodological challenge in this research. Ramon has been in the United States for nearly twenty years. He speaks English fluently. He has even taken community college classes, yet his status here is not one of permanency. His wife was deported and because of this, his children actually went back to Mexico. Because of many of these factors Ramon has regularly switched phones and physical addresses. This is in itself a methodological challenge in trying to establish and keep my connections with people who are so readily trying to remain invisible in the broader
society. Ramon helped me in immeasurable ways to connect with more people during the time of this study, and was willing to help me create more connections had time allowed.

**Participant characteristics**

In total there were fourteen participants for this study. Six of which were classified as children under the age of 18. Five of which are parents of the children, one which was the gatekeeper, and two were in the College Assistant Migrant Program. What links this diverse group of people together is their status as ‘migrant farm workers’ and for the children, children of migrant farmworkers.

All of the parents in this study were parents of the children also in this study. All of the parents worked in various agriculture throughout the year, but for this particular project they were all currently employed in two small-scale well to do farms in the Willamette Valley. All participants spoke at least conversational English. All parents had migrated from Mexico at one point or multiple points in their life. All of the children had spent a majority of their life in the US. All child participants were in school at the time and they too spoke English. All participants referenced themselves as Mexicans or Mexicano/a.

There were six child migrants in this study. I am utilizing ‘child’ as a cohesive factor due to their age, but also due to the inherent power structure that lies between adults and children. Because there were such a low number of participants, it seems vital to provide a little bit of background on each participants. The first children that I did field work with I already knew. Emmanuel and Adriana are brother and sister. They were both born in the United States. Emmanuel is six years old and in full day kindergarten. He is a very smiley and often mischievous boy. He seems to enjoy making his sister frustrated, and teasing her. Though he often does things his sister does not like, he is rarely punished. Instead, his sister usually gets
told that she should have disciplined him better. Emmanuel enjoys drawing and sometimes agrees to play along with his sister. Adriana is his older sister. She is 8 years old and is in first grade, though she should have been in second grade for her age. Adriana is very shy at first, and is often quiet when Emmanuel is not. She gets frustrated often with him, partly because she is partly responsible for keeping him in line. Adriana enjoys looking at the wildlife and nature. She especially likes seeing the squirrels and humming birds. Adriana and Emmanuel live in Oregon all year round. Though they have often migrated within the state and occasionally to Washington for various work. Adriana and Emmanuel have both been to Mexico.

Adriana and Emmanuel’s parents are Artemio and Alicia. Artemio and Alicia have been in the United States for fifteen years. I’ve known them, though not well, for about ten years. Although I have never found out their ages, they did not look older than their early thirties, and that seemed to be stretching it. Alicia and Artemio have been employed off and on with this same farm for 13 years. Alicia and Artemio initially went to California, but they described it as ‘horrible’ compared to Oregon. Artemio had a family member here, so they came to Oregon. Initially they worked in the fields in Southern Oregon where they met a couple who had a farm and needed part time year round help. They said they agreed to come up to the Willamette Valley because they heard there were multiple work opportunities and they liked this couple who offered them higher wages. They bring their kids to the field after they get out of school or when school is not in session. Alicia is the one who picks the kids up from school. She leaves work and drives to get the kids, then returns to the fields with kids so she can work along with Artemio for a few more hours. Artemio is about five foot five inches tall, and his wife is slightly shorter. Though they both speak English, Artemio speaks much more fluently and often describes his wife as ‘no speaking English.’ When he was present he answered all of the questions. I spent
the majority of my fieldwork with this family. Artemio and Alicia worked at ‘Q’ farm, a small organic farm which markets itself as producing the finest quality of what it produces and only employs about two to five employees year round besides in harvest time.

Samuel and Maria are two of the other younger child migrants that I did research with. Samuel was 5 years old, the youngest of my participants and Maria was 8 years old. Sam was in kindergarten, and Maria was in second grade. I spent my time with them mostly outside and on Saturdays when certain things could not wait until Monday on this farm. Their parents, Juan and Marcela, who also took part in this project, had gone to high school in Oregon, which is where they met. Later they returned to Mexico together for a few years before returning once again to raise their kids in Oregon. Juan and Marcela have two older children, Lorena and Gaby. Lorena, who is an adult in the eyes of the law, but not in the eyes of her parents, was not in this study. Lorena is seen as a cause of pain for this family because she did not continue her schooling and instead went to live with a boyfriend, neglecting her family duties. Gaby is their second daughter and she agreed to an interview. Gaby is 17 years old and in high school, as well as other extracurricular activities. This family worked for a different farm that is being called ‘O’ farm, which is actually very similar in number of ways to Q farms. O farm is also a very small organic farm which also markets its items as top of the line. This farm also employs a very small amount of people, thought this farm does not actually have people employed all year round.

Natalia is 6 years old. She is a vibrant young girl. She is the only child of Pedro and his wife. She and her father are the participants. I spent the least amount of time with her and her father in the field. Natalia and her father offer an interesting perspective on child migrants and gendered practices of migrants. Natalia’s mother, and Pedro’s wife, was injured in the fields a couple years back and she has not been able to work since. It is also hard for her to do both the
household duties and take care of her daughter. Pedro started bringing Natalia to the fields when she was just 4 years old and has since continued doing so, on occasion. Natalia often accompanies her father to the fields when she does not have school. She has no babysitter because they cannot afford one with only Pedro working, and sometimes only part time. Her father is not shy about this, unlike the other two sets of parents who bring their kids to the fields sometimes. It appears that because Pedro is a man that he is actually given quite a bit of leniency with having to bring his daughter to the field. Pedro also works at O farm.

Ramon served as the gatekeeper for this study. He manages several farms in the Willamette Valley and thus allowed me access. Ramon was well-trusted and well-liked by many of the farm owners in the area, and as such he worked at various farms. Ramon is in his mid-forties. He is the tallest of any of the participants and has a commanding presence. It is not hard to tell why he is entrusted with so many managerial duties, as he commands respect and authority, though he is also very humble. Because I’ve had the opportunity to know Ramon for some time, I know that he is one of the most kind, sincere and helpful men I know. Throughout the time I’ve known Ramon, he has often just shown up at my parent’s house to chit chat or else to do my parents a favor.

Of the two camp participants I interviewed, they were both young women. These participants will be referred to the young adult migrants throughout this thesis. These two participants from CAMP had both grown up primarily in eastern Oregon. This was quite the contrast to the other participants who all resided in the Willamette valley. Though this could certainly be considered a limitation, it was also a benefit to this project because their voices and experiences echoed that of the child migrants who were in the Willamette Valley. I asked the young adult migrants about their experiences as children retrospectively. Though unintentional, their views mostly
reinforced the themes that came out of the field work with the child migrants. Olivia and Melissa are the names of the two young adult migrants.

   Olivia is a 24 year old Mexicana. She lived in eastern Oregon her whole life with her mom and dad and three younger sisters. I had two in depth interviews with Olivia. Her interviews lasted a total of about five hours. Olivia is one class away from graduation at Oregon State University. She has a very confident demeanor. Olivia already walked in the graduation ceremony with her other CAMP classmates and that was, as she described, a very important moment for her and her whole family.

   The second woman I interviewed from Camp was Melissa. Melissa is a 19 year old Mexicana. Her family moved around Oregon quite a bit as she grew-up, going from the coastal area and eventually settling more permanently in eastern Oregon, which is where she completed high school. Melissa has a smile that makes you want to smile back. I interviewed Melissa once and her interview lasted about two and a half hours. Melissa is a sophomore in college.

   As a methodological side note, this project was very difficult to complete on a practical level and even an emotional level. Protecting my participants was my number one goal in doing this project. Ramon and I had a conversation about ensuring that my research does not reveal any one’s identity, or even where they work. Ramon himself has become a valued and trusted farm laborer for a few small scale farms in the Willamette Valley. He explained to me his fearfulness of ‘la migra,’ finding out where he is because his wife was deported. Afterwards, their children moved back with their mother and maternal grandparents to Mexico. Ramon is the sole support of his family. Ramon understood that I was in school and that I wanted to research. Because of the intense surveillance that migrants are already under, and the potential for identification, I told Ramon I would simply write things down and not electronically record their voices or take any
Type of pictures. This was an extreme struggle methodologically, which pitted my emotional personal ties against my anthropologist researcher-self who dreamed of having absolutely every interaction documented with accompanying digital representations. I knew that to be able to do this project and still protect the people whose hearts are dear to mine, I had to sacrifice some valuable methods of data collection in exchange for not only protective security, but increased trust and openness. Although I knew this meant potentially less data capture and less detailed data accumulation, I was not morally or ethically content with potentially exposing a group of people who were graciously allowing me to interfere in their everyday lives.

My participant observation and informal interviews were performed in the Willamette Valley in Oregon during winter and spring months. I spent two weeks’ worth of days over several months at two different farms. The farms are referenced in this thesis as farm Q and farm O. The specific type of agricultural setting is simply going to be deemed a farm for the purpose of this project. This type of identification is to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Due to the particular style of agriculture being a fairly small niche the participants themselves had concerns about their identity becoming known, which is one of the reasons I have purposefully excluded details about the farms and locations. After discussing the matter with the gatekeeper for this study, I made the decision that it was ultimately best to leave out certain details for the sake of my participants. My hope is that this will not detract from the importance of the children’s voices of this project. A detachment from the specific locale is not all negative because my research indicates that although the kids are brought to these fields with their parents they themselves are pushed to be detached from the fields. Therefore, the fields serve as a symbol for the locale of parent labor that children also occupy though they are not actually allowed to be included.
The mid-Willamette Valley was picked as a site for a number of reasons. First of all, it was about ease of access. I as a researcher had a good connection with a key person who would became the gate keeper. That being said there were two farms which were sites in this study. Both grew multiple agricultural products and had one main ‘staple’ crop. The farms were small, between 25-100 acres of crop, and owned by either families or individuals who took a lot of care and personal concern with their land and farm workers. These farms were unique in terms of agriculture because they actively resisted the large scale monopoly on agriculture in the United States through providing better wages to their workers, and using what they deemed the ‘best crop.’ Ramon described ‘better money than I could get from the farms in bigger towns.’ Ramon mentioned one of the defining characteristics of these farms as being the connections the owners have tried to maintain with their workers. He was very savvy about who was a ‘good guy to work for,’ versus who was not. The subject farms within this study were the ‘good ones,’ according to Ramon. These farm properties were not far geographically from one another, though they were in different towns.

The more formal interviews with the CAMP participants were completed at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. Site selection for the young adult migrants was simply based on ease of location for them. In consideration that they were both Oregon State University students, doing the interviews on campus in the familiar environment during lunch and in various quiet rooms provided easy and convenient interview locations enabling both participants the comfort of least restrictive interruptions from their studies. As it turned out, both young women expressed positive excitement about being asked to be research participants in this study because it accorded them the opportunity to debut their youth experiences as active contributors to research questions without fear of negative response. To my surprise, they both expressed
gratitude to be able to have a legitimate floor to talk to me about their past lives in a safe and secure environment, which I believe at the very least was due in part to our connected-bond as fellow female students enrolled in a large research university, and perhaps even more so, our prior ‘farming roots,’ which provided foundational mutual interests for development of reciprocal trust.

In all further writings these two young adult participants will also be referred to as children of migrant workers without regard to chronological age. Furthermore, all participants were given pseudonyms so as to protect their identity. Because this population is vulnerable on a multitude of levels, I have gone to extreme lengths to minimize their identity. Aside from their names I have changed minor details about them or simply left them out.

Data Analysis

As this project was primarily exploratory in nature, it called for inductive data analysis. Through careful coding of my data, I became ‘grounded’ in my data which ultimately resulted in the creation of themes. Grounded theory was used to guide my initial coding of data toward a theoretical framework. Through countless hours of analysis, I began by coding my field notes and transcriptions for themes. After I had a set of initial themes, I then began to link them to specific frameworks (Bernard 2009).

Limitations

A noted limitation to this study has been my lack of Spanish fluency. I speak Spanish to the point of simple conversation; however I cannot speak it to the point that would have been necessary for this project. With this deficiency I missed out on many things such as cultural nuances, including more varied exchanges between myself and the participants. I also missed out on many more experiences of those migrant farm workers who only speak Spanish. My data
must be considered in relation to this limitation. It is important to note that there is a common
misconception amongst the broader public and in national policy that migrant farm workers
mostly do not speak English. The fact that this study could occur with parents and children in all
English or English dominant is rather symbolic and serves as another example of delegitimizing
the stereotypes surrounding migrant farm workers.

Another methodological limitation of this study was not providing notebooks for all the
children at the onset of this project. Though I quickly realized the importance of my own
notebook as a way to engage the children, I failed to include that as a method of data collection.
At the onset of this project, I believed that my data collections would need to be primarily from
verbal exchanges and watching the interactions of the children and parents. Because I
anticipated being in the fields with these kids, I did not think there would be availability to
collect data through things like their own drawings. My data likely would have been much
richer had the children been able to express themselves in unique ways such as more creative
drawings. Though I was able to keep some of their drawings, some of the children wanted to
keep their creations, which I supported in-kind.

The greatest limitation of this study was my limited time with the younger children. I had a
total of fourteen days of participant observation, although it took nearly three months to get those
fourteen days. This is because when I devised the project with Ramon’s logistics he figured it
would be easier if he simply gave me a heads up when he knew someone on one of his work
crews was going to bring their kids or he would call me the day of when someone arrived at the
fields with their kids. Ramon kindly called me several times for opportunistic field work, but to
this study’s misfortune prior out-of-the-area schedule conflicts sometimes times prevented my
attendance due to the four hour travel time.
Fieldwork with Emmanuel and Adriana was a little easier because once it was decided that they were working on the construction of the building it meant the kids would be there every day after school until the project finished or took a break. In this short period it was most certainly not enough for the parents and kids to let their guards down and see me as much more of a true participant observer. Within this context I must analyze and reflect upon my data, and it is within this context that my data must be understood. My dedicated field work is intellectually representative of a very small time in their everyday lives in which they allowed an outsider to come in to their world for a little while. Though, that should not take away from the fact that this is a group of people, particularly in the context of their location for field work that very rarely has any intellectual representation within anthropology and even any type of social science.
6. Discussion and Results

Introduction

How do migrant children in Oregon experience belonging? How do they describe fitting in, being a part of something and feeling connected? Through the children’s own words and voices, I hope to give insight into a group of people rarely seen or heard from who live in Oregon.

As an anthropologist interested in children I knew that understanding childhood would be important. What I didn’t expect was how childhood became so paramount in the participants’ own understandings of themselves. Modern childhoods have become a commodified entity in and of themselves (Katz 2003). Much like an institution that sets up divisive boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, childhood has done that with the basis of inclusion steeped in the capitalistic market economy (Zelizer 1985). The modern understanding of childhood has become another way for these global forces to interact in the everyday lives of local people (Zelizer 1985). Modern notions of childhood, as Zelizer described and historicized, came from the children becoming consumers and children becoming like a commodity to their parents (1985). The fact that childhood has become modern, indicates that there is another version of childhood that is ‘not’ modern, thus creating a hierarchy of one version of childhood as correct (the modern one) and all others versions of childhood are not correct (therefore not modern) (Hodgson 2001). It is under this modern childhood of today, that the children of migrant farmworkers made their conceptualizations and negotiations with belonging. When the child and young adult migrants’ everyday life failed to live up to the modern childhood, they had to make some negotiations. The following themes reflect their negotiations.
The first theme I will discuss is the idea of a non-childhood. The children and young adult migrants continually positioned themselves in opposition to what they called ‘other kids,’ ‘normal kids’ or ‘lucky ones.’ Sometimes they would outright state that they did not have a childhood. This theme sets up the foundation for the second theme. The second theme was drawn from the voices of the children and builds upon the idea of a non-childhood in relation to children’s feelings and understandings of belonging.

The third theme is about how the children create belongings in their everyday life through idealizing the future and imagining consumption. The future is paramount in this theme in which the children and young adult migrants describe their hopes for the future which rested predominantly on things to be consumed or accumulated. The last theme rejects constructions of migrant generations and assimilation.

**Children’s Non-Childhoods**

In attempting to understand child migrant’s conceptions of belonging I stumbled upon a discourse of what childhood should be like according to the participants. The children of migrant farmworkers defined their own childhoods as a non-childhood. It became apparent in analyzing this research that the children’s ideas of how they should belong, and what childhood is or should be like did not reflect their lived experiences. This revealed a large disjuncture in how children might experience or conceptualize belonging. Due to the children’s own conceptions of their lives as being essentially deprived of what they thought a childhood should be like, this paved the way for their understandings of what it might take for them to feel as though they belong. Children actually created their own ideas of inclusion and exclusion, in conjunction and partly in opposition with their everyday lives and based on the modern consumer ideals of what it means to have a childhood (Zelizer 1985). The children of migrant
farmworkers based their understanding of what they believe a childhood should be like on their perceived lack of a childhood. Common responsibilities such as household chores and caring for siblings were profoundly perceived as not a part of childhood.

**Responsibilities with the House**

There is a firm belief with the children of migrant farmworkers that the responsibilities within the household are not part of childhood. This is very much a gendered discussion because the girls take on much more of the responsibility within the home as opposed to their male siblings. Both of the young adult migrants and two of the child migrants referred to ‘responsibility within the house’ or ‘responsibilities to the house,’ though all of the female participants expressed similar duties that are required of them by their families. The participants who did describe their responsibilities as within the house used that phrase as all-encompassing for all responsibilities related to their family’s wellbeing. This encompassed things such as doing household chores, packing lunches for all family members, caring for younger siblings, driving their parents, and also a general sense of thinking about the needs of the house or the family before your own. This is indeed contradictory because the children all referenced their devotion to their families before thinking of themselves. At the same time thinking of the family first was also seen as a duty which they had no choice over. Olivia referred to her first responsibility as “Always being to the house, then I can think about myself, but only after the needs of the house are taken care of.” This statement was said with pride and also as a source of stress. Thinking about the needs of the house before her own desires was in conflict with many things she wanted to do, such as go to college away from the family.

The other children of migrant farmworkers expressed similar feelings as Olivia. Adriana and Maria were both 8 years old at the time of this project, and they both expressed disdain with
having to, as Adriana described, ‘care for the house.’ Although these responsibilities are a fact of their life they view them as being a large factor in their experience of a non-childhood. Both Adriana and Maria would often describe their household duties in relation to not being able to do something else. This chasm represents a clash of moral worlds with one world being their home life with their families and the other world being what they see as the ‘typical’ childhood, in which their lives are free from adult responsibilities.

The following interview with Olivia examples child migrant responsibility:

**Ashley Crawford:** “What things did you like to do as a kid? What were things you really enjoyed?”

**Olivia:** “…mmm to be honest, there was not many. I don’t know like exactly what to pin point one or another thing. Because we never really had what a lot of people think is a typical childhood. We weren’t ever allowed to be kids unless there were other kids around because we always had responsibilities.”

**Ashley Crawford:** “What kinds of responsibilities Olivia?”

**Olivia’s extensive answer:**

Well I always had to look out for my sister that was 3 years younger. So I had to make sure that she was taken care of… In the mornings I had to get up with my mom, and wake up my sisters. With one (of my sisters) it was hard because she was three years younger and even though that is not a big age difference it’s still hard. I had to make sure her backpack was packed, had to check all three lunch bags, me, my sisters and my mom’s and my dad’s to make sure all the lunches were packed correctly. Then I had to make sure I was dressed and make sure my sister was like physically up. And then when the little one was born; I was nine and so pretty much from that point on, and forward I was the big sister, the adult that had to make sure everything was done. My mom only took off six weeks when she was born and then we were back at the babysitters. And that was a little harder because you know like making sure she’s in her car seat and taking care of her at the babysitters. A lot of time I wouldn’t be able to nap before I went to school, because she’d cry and I’d have to get her to sleep and just make sure she was taken care of. When I’d come back from school, my aunt was, I’m
pretty sure she was tired of putting up with her, and so I had to take over. My mom was really tired. She had to cook for the next day and for dinner. Or you know she had to get some rest too, because it’s a long day in the fields.

Olivia shows a common theme amongst all of the child migrants. The girls in all three of the families in this study were expected to take on the responsibility of helping to take care of their younger siblings and also to help with the daily household chores in much greater proportion than they boys of the family. Olivia was just nine years old when her youngest sister was born she was expected to take on the duty of caring for a baby and her younger sister though she still referenced her mother’s day as more exhausting than her own. Olivia shows that she is looking out for her family’s best interest before her own. She justifies her responsibilities of helping her mother out as a duty not a choice. Although, Olivia shows a deep level of caring and understanding for her mother, she believes that this is not how a ‘normal’ childhood should be and therefore presents her account of her household responsibility as both her selflessness for her family and also as something she did not feel she should be doing in the context of being a child. Olivia did these things out of care for her family, but she also recognizes that this does not extend into her ideas of what a childhood should be like. It is through this disconnect of her own experiences and her own expectations of childhood in which Olivia feels like her childhood doesn’t live up to what childhood should be. This represents another example of the moral clashes that children of migrant farmworkers experience on a daily basis.

As I was starting the interview with Melissa, she told me she did not want to answer the first question, which was “What is your best memory as child?” Her reasoning for this, “Because I didn’t really have any happy memories.” This answer stuck with me particularly because Melissa is so vibrant. I thought, “How could someone who seems to beam happiness not think
of one happy memory?” Melissa later expanded upon her childhood experiences and when asked about what she did after school.

I would stay and play (at school) for the longest time I could, maybe like a half hour, and then go walk home. And then, that’s when I had to put on my big girl pants. My mom expected the house to be clean. You know before she got back (from work), I had to clean, and cook for my siblings. Nothing serious, like quesadillas, eggs or cup of noodles. But yeah, I learned fast. I had to grow up fast.

Later on in the interview, Melissa does indeed describe happy times. Melissa’s reasoning for expressing happy memories or describing happy times was always in relation to if she was allowed to participate in the idea of modern childhood, which was always equated with being ‘normal.’

This idea of a ‘normal’ childhood is rooted in the ideals of a modern childhood as a universal one-size fits all experience. Zelizer argues that children’s roles in the western world are to consume and that consuming is now a part of childhood (1985). This modern view of childhood creates an image of childhood which is sold to the masses, although this version of childhood is largely unattainable to most people except the wealthy. The adults and children alike consume this image of childhood and then reflect the values and ideals associated with this unattainable version of childhood (Horton 2008). Olivia quite literally expresses that she feels like she does not have a childhood and it is due to her responsibilities within the house. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza describe that adult migrants with children feel their family structure is being pulled apart and that a disjuncture is common in Mexican migrants in Oregon and across the United States particularly because of the strong familial ties in Mexico and the perceived ‘liberal’ attitude of parenting and child rearing in the US (2008). Thus the familial responsibility is tied with ethnic identity. The idea that the children feel they should not have to do something simply
because they are children is a disconnect of modern society and represents a border, which child migrants have to negotiate (Stephen 2007). Though, this disconnect runs much deeper than nationalistic ties, this disconnect is what is common in the globalized neoliberal world of vagabond capitalism (Katz 2003 and Mohanty 2003). Capitalism, as discussed earlier, played a large role in the creation of childhood and globalization is responsible for spreading these ideas globally, while neoliberal markets and policies perpetuate the migration and imaginaries of migrating (Katz 2003).

In one of the days that I spent with Adriana and Emmanuel, Adriana reflected upon not being able to do things that other children get to do. Set up the scene during my field work Alicia and Artemio were working on a construction project for the farm in which they work. The main construction was completed which consisted of a large house like structure that was to be used for storage and perhaps as a market or store. The details and aesthetics were still being worked on such as the countertops, painting and flooring. Most of the time when I was there Alicia was painting while Artemio was elsewhere doing more physical labor. This nearly finished building is where I spent almost all of my time with Alicia, Artemio and their children Emmanuel and Adriana. Artemio was rarely around during participant observation because the nature of his work took him outside. Interestingly, I have much more narrative from Artemio than from his wife. There is one particular room of this building in which Emmanuel, Alicia and I spent most of our time. This room is quite large for two children and me. There were two large windows that looked out over the rolling landscape, plentiful with trees, fields and rural gravel road. The room was nearly a pentagon shape and had a large open double doorway, which did not have a door. This room had large windows and offered a good view of the farm. This room was not finished. It was only partially painted and it had a hole in the ceiling which looked to be where a
fan or light would go. This is why I refer to it as the nearly finished room. The building itself
was two stories tall and we were on the top level. It is within this context that most of my field
work with Adriana and Emmanuel occurred. On this particular day, as was common, their
mother had picked them up from school and brought them back to where she and her husband
(her father) were working so that they could finish the day’s work.

I was sitting on the floor in the nearly finished room, allowing Emmanuel to play with my
phone, after much insistence from him. I caved and showed him a game that Jake loved to play.
Meanwhile, Adriana was not interested as she had started drawing. I brought colored pencils for
them since the day before I found out what a great distraction my notebook was to them.
Adriana had asked to color in it. While I was showing Emmanuel my phone and explaining what
to do I noticed Adriana was drawing a picture of a girl with yellow hair. I finished showing
Emmanuel what to do and then quietly watched Adriana draw and watched Emmanuel play
happily. He seemed to enjoy the game. It was a matching game where you essentially piece
together a puzzle. He soon finished and needed my help to get another puzzle. After I got
another puzzle for him Adriana had drawn three girls; two with brown hair and one with yellow
hair. All three had triangle dresses on and she was coloring them all pink. Adriana noticed I was
looking at her drawing and stopped. She looked embarrassed, but continued drawing. I asked
her who she was drawing.

**Adriana:** “These are my friends…and me. I’m right here (pointing to the brown haired
one on the (pointing to the one of the end).”

**Ashley Crawford:** “Oh and what are you doing in the picture”

**Adriana:** “We are holding hands and we are playing. We are pretending we are
princesses,”

**Ashley Crawford:** “Oh is that what you girls play?”
Adriana: With a sad look, but smiling in a sigh...“Yeah…at recess. Amelia said I could go to her house and sleep there and we would play and her mom would cook for us, but I can’t.”

Ashley Crawford: “Why can’t you?”

Adriana: “Because (continuing to draw) I can’t do that. Other kids get to. But I can’t. We can’t do things like that. And I have to help with the house….and him (pointing at her brother).”

Adriana also reflects ideas that there are things she really wants to do and desires to do but can’t, due to family obligation and responsibilities. The children all seemed to reflect the idea that they were missing out on something that impacted their lives. As Adriana points out, socializing with friends is another example commonly brought up by the children as things they could not do. There seems to be a proper way to socialize with friends in the children’s minds. Things like having play dates and going to their friends’ houses or going out to eat with their friends or going shopping were all examples of proper ways to socialize with friends. This type of socializing is very individualistic. The children see it as necessary to have time by yourself outside of your family and school to socialize with your own friends. Having time by oneself to go and do nothing other than playing is in itself a luxury afforded to people who have time to commit to do such things, and it is also based on the ideas that friends are tied to the individual, not the family. While playing with your friends at school can be great and fun, it is only one of the proper locations for play. By not being able to go to her friend’s house, she was missing out on another part of what she felt was the right way to do childhood. This also shows an example of the moral worlds clashing in her daily life.

This brings up the idea about proper children’s spaces and emplacement. Places are both physical and social because people place social importance upon physical places (Gardner and Mind 2012). Emplacement explains how childhood is constructed in each society and how the
constrains within each society (2012). The physical and social locations which are acceptable for each child within a society are based on the gender, race, class and childhood borders within each society. Emplacement results from local and global forces, with these forces interacting constantly (2012). Adriana understands that children’s emplacement within society does equate with the emplacement that she experiences as a child. The emplacement that society defines for children is part of the modern childhood, whereas on the other hand, the emplacement that her family places her into is incompatible with modern childhood.

Thus, Adriana goes on to position herself to say that she ‘hasn’t ever really felt like kid.’ She is not alone in this feeling as both the young adult migrants echoed this near exact same thing as well as Maria and Gaby. By always describing how they didn’t have what they considered a childhood, they described a different childhood which I am calling a non-childhood. The children’s ideas of belonging are inherently linked to the idea of the modern childhood. This represents and shows the clashing of moral worlds of the modern childhood and the non-childhood. The non-childhood is the children’s everyday lives, while the modern childhood is the longed for life; a consumer laden ideal version of childhood, which the children feel as though they are missing out on.

What this idea of a non-childhood indicates is that although the children and the young adults verbalized ways in which they were not having a ‘childhood,’ in reality they simultaneously attempted to ‘fit-in’ with the ideas of modern childhood. Thus they both emphasized exclusion in their everyday life and methods to promote their inclusion. In terms of belonging, they both perpetuated the idea that they belonged, and longed to belong within narratives of childhood, yet in their everyday lives they did not belong.

**What do non-childhoods mean for belonging?**
As discussed elsewhere in this paper, belonging is about attachments to people, places or things (Ni Laoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrrell and White 2011). This theme feeds heavily off of the idea of non-childhoods. Non-childhoods implies that there is a right and a wrong way to ‘do’ childhood and this became a large factor in how the children and young adult migrants perceived belonging. If the children of migrant farm workers perceived an experience to be out of the realm of what childhood should be like, then it was very difficult for them to describe any sense of belonging, connection or attachment. This section is broken up into how these non-childhoods equate to non-belongings in terms of the family, friends, and places within their lives. This section ends with an understanding about when the children of migrant farmworkers had an actual experience that was within their understanding of childhood, and then they actually described feelings of connections and attachments.

Family

The families of the children of migrant farmworkers are vital to their everyday life. I asked both the child migrants and young adult migrants how do you feel you fit in with your family? Olivia responded to this question:

Like with my immediate family, I feel like I am the kid or the daughter that gets the most pressure. Because I’m…, my parents always tell me that whatever I do well or bad my sisters are going to do some version of them. So I need to choose very carefully. And that’s a lot of pressure sometimes. Because there, you know, just like everyone, there’s a lot of things that I’m not very proud of. And, and I don’t want my sisters to feel like they have to do the things, the good things that I’ve done or feel like they have to meet a standard. And I don’t want them to think that it’s okay to do some of the bad things that I’ve done. So it’s a lot of pressure sometimes. But at the same time it’s really, really nice because when I do good things I feel like, it’s a reflection of my parents work. Like all the things, all the sacrifices they’ve had since we were kids or before we were born, I think it’s a reflection of like say like you know it was worth it for something. There are sometimes that I’d like to forget that that person or that role model because like I don’t I don’t like feeling pressured. But at the same time I think it’s kept me in line, focused on a
goal. Or at the same time it’s given me, some sort of like ground of saying no, or not giving up. To like know if you give up like, what are you kids going to think. Or sometimes I tell myself to think back on how my dad had it like when he crossed the border. And like hearing my grandpa like with stories and seeing my mom work in the fields, still work in the fields. See her get sick from it or how her hands swells up or when they’re pruning it makes me think like, my life is way, I had it easy compared to them. So is this test really going to stop me? Is this study guide really going to stop me? Or you know like when the good things come; you know I’m offered an internship or free conference in Chicago. You know those are the times I’m like uhhh its all this work is worth for something.

Olivia’s answer revealed a theme that would persist; that fitting in with your family is about how well you play your role within the family. Olivia definitely showed attachment and exhibited a sense of belonging within her family due to her familial role. Throughout the interview she reiterated her responsibilities within her family while simultaneously describing her childhood lacking time for her to ‘be a kid.’ Olivia’s response to being asked what she liked to do as a child was rather telling, “Mmmmm to be honest there was not many. I don’t know like exactly to pin point one thing. We weren’t ever really allowed to be kids unless there were other kids around because we always had responsibilities.” Though Olivia never described that she did not fit in within her family, she described fitting in according to her perceived duty to her family. She stated her familial duty in conjunction with a hardship, like feeling pressure or not feeling like she was able to ‘be a kid.’ Melissa responded to the question of how did you feel you fit in with your family in this way:

When my mom went to Alaska, and we, before leaving to school in Mexico, we lived for a small period of time with my aunt, at my aunt’s house and my cousin Elisa also lived there. And my cousin Leo also lived there and they were in high school, I think they, they picked on me. So like they joined forces and they picked on me so much that I would cry myself to sleep. And uh, it was horrible, (she said this with a smile, and laugh) and I could do nothing about it, because I mean I had to pretend like nothing was wrong when my mom would call on the phone. Because I didn’t want to worry her. I didn’t want her
to be like, ohh, I just, ohh ohh schools good or whatever. You know I’m doing good; I think it was summer actually. I’m doing good help my aunt with the chores and I help her cook and stuff, and my brother and sister are good. But I never really talked about like, I never complained about what was going on. Because I didn’t want her to worry, because I knew she would and she worries already enough. I didn’t want her to worry more and I didn’t want her to feel like I wasn’t ok, so I had to put that front. It was tough. It was a lot of internal. It was an internal battle and sometimes I would get these weird moods and I would just cry out of nowhere. And I couldn’t cry in public of course, I couldn’t cry and let everybody know that I was crying, so I would just do it in the bathroom or you know under the covers, outside. But yeah it was tough and then my aunt’s husband was tough on us. He, he, he’s what we call machista, and umm, he, everything had to be his way. And I think my aunt wasn’t strong enough to just stand up to him at that point, but, now they’re divorced. And yeah, he was, he was tough. So, it was a tough time for me.

Melissa, who had cared for her two younger siblings before this particular instance, ended up also taking on the role of ‘caring’ for her mother by not wanting to worry her. Melissa took on a similar type of responsibility that she already had within her family and extended it in an act to take care of both her siblings and her mother. For both Melissa and Olivia they relate to ‘how they fit in with their family’ with the responsibilities they had in their family. Life with their families, as they described to me, was about their responsibilities within the family. These responsibilities were met with the understanding that doing them meant not participating in their idea of childhood.

Responsibilities within the family and a lack of ‘fitting’ in were described by Gaby, the second oldest daughter of Juan and Marcela. Gaby was 17 years old and a high school student. She got her license immediately upon turning 16, and she began driving her parents as much as she could. Gaby and I met at a local coffee shop; a place that is comfortable to her. I wasn’t really sure how to interact with her at first because I had known her siblings only from the brief time I had spent in the field with them. This interview occurred after the fieldwork with her family.
Gaby wore a white long sleek fitted shirt with buttons going half way down, stylish jeans, and tennis shoes. I met her only because she had come to pick up her parents and siblings from the fields one day. Her dad had never been able to regain his license after the Oregon law passed that prevented people without legal residency to have a license. Since she has been 16, she says, she has been the sole transportation of her family. It is within this context that I asked her the question of how she feels she fit in with her family and this is Gaby’s response:

Well, that’s hard, you know. I don’t know. I guess I always felt like I was holding things together, especially after my older sister left. That made everything, everything a lot tougher. Because she did a lot of the house work, like helping the little ones get up for school, and dressing them and making sure they had lunch, and I help you know, but she was always there too. But, you know, she just didn’t want to, she couldn’t handle it anymore. Not after she tried so hard to get into college, that’s all she wanted, but she could not find the money. You know, there is not much help out there for kids who aren’t here with papers. I have papers. I was lucky though, I was born here. I can do a lot more than she could. But you know, it’s still tough. Seeing all my friends going out to movies, or shopping or something, and I have to go home after school, or pick up my brother and sister. There is always something to do at the house. I can’t ever just do the things my friends can do. It’s harder for us. What was the question again?

How do you feel you fit in with your family, or you could think of it like, how do feel you belong in your family?

Oh, yeah, yeah ok. Ummm, you know. I guess I just feel like I’m just doing what I need to do to get by don’t get me wrong I love my family and I would do whatever it takes to help my family, and my family is my family, but, I don’t know, I have other things I want to do in my life than just you know, have a family or raise kids.

Gaby echoes the words of the children of migrant farmworkers. Within the context of her family, Gaby also reiterates her role within the household as one in which she ‘holds things together.’ Later on Gaby said that she felt she did not have much of a ‘childhood’ because she was always helping to care for her younger siblings, and even now she said she still cares for
them at times. Gaby expanded and described how her family duties and roles actually come into conflict with her own goals.

Gaby’s parents, however, describe her as the exemplar child when asked how she fit into their family. She was seen as the example for Maria (her younger sister) because she fulfilled her familial role as was expected of her, which consisted of completing household chores, caring for her siblings, getting good grades, and generally helping her family when needed. Gaby’s own understanding that she is fulfilling her duty within her household also came with her understanding that she does not have a childhood. For Gaby and the other children of migrant farmworkers they shared a view of an idealized modern childhood rooted in the idea that childhood was outside of adult responsibility. The connections that Gaby, Olivia and Melissa have with their family are mediated through the discourse of the modern childhood.

I tried to ask both Adriana and Emmanuel ‘how they fit in with their family,’ but I quickly learned that this question was simply an unacceptable question. I was met with a very uncomfortable scenario and learned my lesson rather quickly as is expressed in this excerpt from my field notes:

As Adriana and Emmanuel were finishing telling me about the happenings in school that day and getting settled into the room for what would be the next couple of hours, I figured I might as well just see how they answer this question: How do you fit in with your family? I was met with bewildered looks on both Emmanuel and Adriana’s part. Emmanuel continued what he had been doing, taking his jacket off and grabbing a paper airplane he had apparently made at school out of his bag. Adriana seemed to think about this, and finally said “I think I’m a good girl for my parents. I do what they ask me to do, and I try hard in school. I always make sure to clean the dishes, and sweep the floor, and I take care of my brother.

Adriana, much like Olivia and Melissa, related her understanding of fitting in based on her role, her responsibility within the house. She is therefore a ‘good girl’ because she accomplishes
her responsibilities. It was around this point that Artemio was walking back inside and came
into the broad open doorway. Clearly, he had heard some of what his daughter said and asked
her in Spanish was she was saying. It was almost like she was being reprimanded and she knew
it, and I had clearly crossed a boundary because Artemio was taking a defensive and frustrated
tone and asked me what I ‘want to know about her in the family?’ I told him what I asked her.
He seemed relieved but then told me, “Her place and Emmanuel is with us and her
responsibilities are with her house. The children have mucho respeto.”

Ashley Crawford: Respect?’

Artemio: Si, respect.

Then he told me something I really did not expect, and with his kids listening before him and his
wife peaking around the corner:

> You know, this country is really good, and the kids can have a
> better life. This country, the children have no respect here. They
don’t listen to their parents; they just don’t have (respect) like in
>mexico. Back in Mexico, the children have chores but no kids here.
> Adriana and Emmanuel, they have respect.”

This exchange was rather interesting because I would have asked that question in front of him,
and indeed I actually asked him and Alicia that same question of their children, but I assume that
because there was some type of assumption that I was interfering with the family, there was
agitation. After this exchange when it was just me and the kids again Adriana looked flustered
and said, “Maybe don’t ask that again ok?” I agreed.

Artemio made a good point. For him there was no question of where they kids fit in or
belonged; they simply belonged to the family. That was that, and it disallows for the type of
individuality that the modern ideas of childhood perpetuate. However, when he has answered
other questions about his children he would reiterate how much he and his wife want a better life
for their kids, and that they are getting it here in the USA and how happy they are that their kids do not have to work. These statements reflect Artemio’s ideology of childhood. He would put his childhood in contrast with his children’s and describe how he had never even been to a doctor as a child, but now his children have great doctors. Childhood for him may be equally idealized just as his children idealize their childhood but in a different way. Although that exchange did indeed provide rich information about the designations of being in a migrant family, for Adriana and Emmanuel the social cost of having their father step in whether or not he was actually upset was beside the point, just the fact that he stepped in and assumed the possibility for disrespect was enough.

This exchange with Adriana and Artemio also highlighted a very important point about parenting as migrant parents. Artemio and his wife are under near constant surveillance simply due to the fact that they are Mexican migrant farmworkers. This surveillance extends also to their parenting practices (Gonzalez-Berry, Mendoza 2008 and Stephen 2008). Artemio and Alicia (and the other migrant parents) are well aware of this surveillance and monitoring. Their parenting practices are not just being monitored but they are also under scrutiny. Artemio fully understands this as he described, “We just want what’s better for our kids, you know, we wants what’s better, what’s better, what’s better. When Adriana went to migrant Head Start, they tell us what is good for our daughter. No that’s not okay.” Artemio and his wife’s experiences with being criticized and monitored in their parenting practices here in the United States caused both of them to learn to be defensive in regards to the parenting of their children. This also seems to have caused a clear hierarchy within the family. The fathers all exert considerable influence over their families and both parents provide very strict rules for all of their children. However, the children who have gone to Mexico with their parents strongly point out that they are under much
less rules from their parents during residency in their ancestral country. The family structure seems to be in place from Mexico, but the extreme levels of control and governance that the parents place on their children while in the United States seems to be a result of government sponsored educational surveillance policies and scrutiny that the parents are under for parenting their children.

Nearly all interactions of the children and parents showed the levels of hierarchy within the family. One incident in particular is a good example of this. Adriana and Emmanuel had been in the nearly finished room for about an hour and a half, which for them was beginning to be a source of boredom. Their mother was in another close by room painting. There happened to be a multitude of empty and seemingly sealed paint cans in the room that leads out of the room that the kids were in. Emmanuel and Adriana had been counting the animals, mainly birds, out the window but there did not seem to be too many and they were quickly growing tired of this activity.

Emmanuel went and grabbed one of the paint cans and at first just used it to sit on to watch out the window. Between his getting up and down again the paint can ended up being knocked over and rolling. This seemed to spark Emmanuel’s ideas. He told his sister to play with him. They both sat a few feet apart and rolled the can to each other. I sat on the side next to the window and watched with my notebook in hand. They rolled the can back and forth a couple times before Emmanuel rolled it to me without a word to me. I rolled it back to him, and he and sister continued playing. Emmanuel rolled it harder than his sister and his sister told him a couple times to not do that and then she told him to ‘keep quiet,’ as the paint can made a lot of noise rolling on the floor. Emmanuel almost seemed to enjoy his sister’s discomfort and rolled it about as hard as he could and it rolled out the room and slammed loudly into a connecting wall to
where their mother was working. Adriana quickly ran after the can and grabbed it. Their mother, Alicia, was already coming out of the room. Upon seeing the can she quickly disciplined Adriana by scolding her for playing with the can. She said repeatedly that Adriana knows that is not a game. Adriana tried to quietly counter her mom and say that Emmanuel rolled the can, and she told him not to, but Alicia was instead more upset that Adriana did not keep her brother under control. It was Adriana’s fault that the paint can rolled into the wall because she did not stop Emmanuel. Alicia chastised Adriana for not controlling her brother saying she needs to watch him more. Alicia then instructed Adriana to return the can and watch over her brother better. Alicia gave me a look of almost helpless embarrassment before shaking her head and getting back to work. Emmanuel seems to understand that his sister is supposed to be his ‘keeper,’ but takes pleasure in being able to get her in trouble. Adriana’s role in her family is steeped in responsibility of her younger sibling. In this exchange her mother only held Adriana responsible for causing trouble. Though this is just one example, this was fairly normal for the Adriana as it was for Maria whom also has a younger brother. Alicia’s extreme control over her children can be seen as a reaction to the fear of judgment of her own parenting practices. In this example we can see the ‘pressure’ that Olivia was describing.

These interactions seemed to show a common theme amongst all of the children of the migrant farmworkers which is that fitting in with one’s family is always in relation to playing the ‘proper’ role within the family. As addressed previously about the children’s non-childhood, the responsibilities that are expected out of the children are perceived by the children as part of a non-childhood, though all of the children seemed to accept their roles with little resistance.

The children and young adults describe fitting in and connections to their family within the context of their roles. However, they simultaneously expressed frustration with their roles. The
frustration they expressed with their roles can be directly analyzed within the ideals of modern
childhoods. It was difficult for the Gaby, Olivia and Melissa to express how they fit in with their
families when they felt outside of childhood. When they seemed to do things that were within
the realm of childhood they were better able to articulate a sense of belonging. Melissa in
particular relayed a time when her mom used to get home from work and she’d be exhausted and
lay down on the couch and relax and watch soap operas. Melissa and her two siblings all wanted
‘to be around her,’ so they would all watch soap operas together. For Melissa, having her mom
present and not having to be ‘the mom’ figure to her siblings allowed her to be a child in a way
that fit with the ideals of modern childhood.

Maria recounted very happy memories of when her family went to the movie theater. She
described how her parents took them there as a ‘treat,’ and that her dad called her his princesa,
princess. The way Maria recounted this story was a far cry from how Juan treated his daughter.
He treated her as if she was a small adult who was fully capable of caring for her younger
brother and keeping him safe while he and wife worked in the fields. Maria however recounted
this event of going to the movies theater as somewhat of a treasure and she described it as one of
the times that she, “got to do what other kids do.” This is an example of Maria’s moral worlds
being succinct with each other. Something that she desired and expected as a child, such as
going to the movie theater was fulfilled. When the children of migrant farmworkers described
memories of being able to do things that they believed was a part of childhood they described
happiness and attachments. Their beliefs about the values of childhood served to be very
important in the children’s emotional lives. This section’s focus has been on family
relationships, the next section focuses on friendships. Much like the children of migrant
farmworkers longed for a certain type of family interaction they also longed for a certain type of interaction with friends.

**Friends**

Children of migrant farmworkers desired to have close friendships that they could nurture both in and out of school. Friendships, much like family relationships, seemed to help create their ideas of inclusion or exclusion. Two of the questions I asked the child migrants were, “Who are your friends” and “Tell me about your friends?” I received incredibly varied responses, ranging from excitement to tell me about their friends and explaining all the fun things they do together, to others telling me flat out that they have no friends. In one instance in field work Emanuel was very excited to tell me all about his ‘friends,’ but his sister was quick to reprimand him for this.

**Ashley Crawford:** “Tell me about your friends? What are they like?”

**Emmanuel:** “Oh I have good friends, but I don’t see them too much. They are (thinking about this awhile…then shrugs his head) good friends. We play soccer and they like my cars.”

**Ashley Crawford:** “Why don’t you see them too much?”

**Emmanuel:** “Well I just see them in Mexico.”

(His sister interrupts)

**Adriana:** “Those aren’t your friends. They are cousins. That’s not what she meant.”

After this exchange between the siblings they started arguing back and forth and going between Spanish and English. Adriana was criticizing her younger brother for thinking that their cousins were also friends. Adriana explained that they made him cry once when they wouldn’t let him play the game that they were playing. Adriana is socializing her brother to understand that friends are different from family. Emmanuel was six at the time of this study, and though he
had been to migrant preschool since he was 3 years old and was currently in kindergarten I got
the inkling that his boisterous ways with his sister did not extend to school. Adriana mentioned
that Emmanuel is shy at school and gets picked on a lot.

I asked Adriana what are her friends like. Adriana explained:

    I have two best friends, Amelia and Sarah. We tell each other
    secrets and play games and help each other out. Amelia is the
    sporty one, she loves playing sports. Sarah also likes sports,
    but Sarah is really funny, and she has a puppy named Fred,
    and she said I could hold him, if her mom will bring him to
    school.”

These friends that Adriana is discussing attend her school and are in the same grade level.
Adriana tells me that Emmanuel does not understand what friends are because he doesn’t have
any friends. She said this with sympathy, not to be mean, it appeared. Adriana had made her
friends at school but she desired more time with them outside of school and less responsibility at
home.

Melissa, one of the CAMP participants, also reiterated Adriana’s ideas when asked the similar
questions, “As a child, who were your friends? What were they like?”

    I had a friend named Elena and she was Latina. And then I also
    had another friend named Jackie and she was white. It used to be
    the three of us. We used to call ourselves the three musketeers.
    And it was fun. I loved going to school because it was a nice
    way to be, to get away from, you know home and not be so
    strict and just am…feel like a kid. And I was always really
    good at school, so I was always encouraged by my teachers.

For Melissa and Adriana they both restated that friendships developed and nurtured at school
were ways to ‘escape’ the household responsibilities and also a way for them to feel they ‘fit’ in
and just like Melissa said, a way for them to be a kid. These friendships, which Adriana and
Melissa both cherished, became an outlet for being able to be a ‘kid’ or in other words to
perform their ideas of childhood. Their friendships are influenced by the idea of what it meant to
be a ‘kid.’ Melissa saw having these friendships as fundamental to her experience of childhood which is in contrast to the time she spent at home where she has described not feeling like a kid.

Olivia’s experience of friendships was very different from the experiences of Melissa and Adriana. Olivia describes her experience with how she felt she fit in with her friends:

I didn’t have friends really, to be honest. Not so much the responsibilities, just because I didn’t ever take the time to really fit in with everything. I was just so focused on doing good in school and I was never the kind of girl. I still am never the type of girl that is trendy or does the makeup thing or dresses up and stuff, and I was in band. I always made sure I was in good with my teachers and I asked a lot of questions. I actually got bullied a lot in school because I was that one different girl. There were a lot of Mexicans in my school, but like I said I never really took the time to make good friends.

And later in the interview in response to a question about if she ever did anything after school, Olivia exclaimed, “I don’t know what it’s like to go out with your friends in high school. Because my parents never let me go to homecoming or prom.” Olivia states she never took the time to make friends and she reiterates constantly about her numerous responsibilities within her home. Olivia had to take care of her younger siblings both before school and after school due to her parents work schedules. Later in high school her parents saw extracurricular activities as beneficial to her to ‘get results.’ While doing sports and being involved in various leadership activities and clubs at her high school she still had to take care of her siblings. Within the torrent of all this activity it makes sense why she never had time to make friends. Later on Olivia elaborates more about her experience with friends.

Like I said… I never really took the time to make friends because I was so busy and you know to me…like…it’s not something I ever had…so I didn’t know what the difference was. And … Uhh I don’t know… my dad always said that the people who want to friends are going to be nice to you. And all these kids were mean to me. They’d call me names. They’d make
fun of my clothes. Because sometimes like to be honest we never had the money to like go out and buy like really nice clothes…. If our clothes weren’t falling apart my parents were like…it’s still good…so suck it up. I mean we got new clothes…when school started and when there was clearance at the end of the summer. That was that was the best time, I remember I’d get three jeans… three shirts and a pair of shoes and a jacket…if I was lucky. So I didn’t have a lot of clothes and you know sometimes my clothes fit me a little snug or whatever…the jeans I outgrew and stuff… so they’d make fun of me.

Though Olivia describes her lack of friends as a choice, later she reveals that she really did not have a choice. In fact, Olivia had tried to persuade people to be her friend or let her sit with them at lunch, even attempting to buy others snacks in exchange for sitting with them. Olivia did have a lot of responsibilities back home just like the other children of migrant farmworkers. Though Olivia also shows a painful past in which not only did she not quite feel like she fit in at home, but at school as well.

Olivia and Emmanuel represent a contrast to the other tales of friendship. As opposed to the other children, they did not have any close friendships at school. While the others all described friendships at school. All of the children were constrained in their friendships by their home duties. All children felt socially isolated regardless of if they had friends at school or not. These accounts of the children of migrant farmworkers’ friends show ambiguity, uncertainty and varied levels of belonging. This alone is telling in that it shows the uniqueness of these child migrants and that they are not so easily placed into boxes of what it means to belong.

The responses of the parents also varied when asked about their children’s friendships. I asked Artemio and Alicia about their children’s friendships after I had already spoken with their children on this topic. I arrived at the farm a little early and the kids were still in school. Artemio and Alicia were working together that day. Their responses were interesting especially when taken in conjunction with their children’s responses.
Ashley Crawford: “What are your children’s friends like?”

Artemio: “Their friends? Our friends?”

Ashley Crawford: “The kids that your kids play with? Who are their friends? Do they have friends?”

Artemio: “Oh...si si. Sometimes, my son and daughter play with other kids when we go to the park for a barbeque, or my brother’s kids. They play.”

Ashley Crawford: What about at school?

Artemio: No, no. That’s not what they do at school. “

From that point on, Artemio basically shut me down for any questioning about his children’s friends. His body language and speaking tensed up and he looked bewildered, as if to say why are you even asking that? It appeared that my question was nonsensical to him and not meaningful. Artemio seemed to almost think it was ridiculous that the children would have friends at school, or outside of family interactions. His oldest daughter seemed to think very differently. For Adriana this social isolation was an extreme disconnect that she had to negotiate within her daily life. While she wanted to maintain the close friendships that she found in school her family obligations did not see those friendships as legitimate. This is almost like pitting the modern version of childhood itself against the idea of the Mexican family, which is a very tightknit force almost within itself. The parents are also very protective of their children and their responses are indicative of that.

Natalia’s father Pedro answered questions about who his daughter’s friends are and what they are like:

Ooooh, mi Talia, she is a friend to everyone. She is such a good (girl). She always does what she needs to do, and help so much.”
Pedro really did not go into detail though he appeared genuine when speaking about Natalia. Pedro describes his reasoning that she is a friend because she is a helper. Though his daughter’s response to the question, can you tell me about your friends, was interesting in conjunction with her father’s comment. After I asked the question, her eyes went from looking bright and vibrant and looking back at mine, to looking at the floor and the wall. Her vibrancy left and Natalia softly whispered, “I want friends. But, sometimes no one wants to play with me. And it makes me sad. So I go and sit on the swing, or I’ll go next to teacher.”

**Ashley Crawford:** “Is that at school?”

**Natalia:** (Shakes her head). “Sometimes I have friends; sometimes I play with Mackenzie and Norma. And we like to play on the monkey bars.”

**Ashley Crawford:** ‘Do they not play with you now?”

**Natalia:** No. “They just run away when I try to play.”

The parent’s responses show a contrast to the responses of their children. Taken without context this could look like the parents simply do not know what their children are up to. However, the parents do know what their children are up to and they monitor them constantly. Instead the parents are reproducing their own ‘tacit notions of childhood (Hutchins 2011). For example one such tacit notion of childhood that the adults exhibited is that one does not have friends at school, because school is not about socializing (Hutchins 2011). Artemio also can be seen as expressing a more individualistic attitude questioning the need to have friends, particularly outside of time with the family? Whereas Pedro sees his daughter as a good helper therefore that equates with friendship, although his daughter Natalia clarifies that she does not really have friends. The parents are also aware of the judgment that they receive for their parenting practices. Many of the parents seemed especially cautious in answering questions
about their children that may be perceived negatively. All of the parents’ answers in regards to their children reflected things that were positive; there was little criticism of their children. The responses that the parents’ gave in regards to anything related to their children served to bolster their strength as a family.

**Places**

It became apparent that spaces and places were intimately tied to this notion of belonging and specifically a ‘proper’ place of belonging. Children’s places are, like children, a product of social and cultural constructions. Place is both social and physical and allows us to dissect the relationships between the social, the physical and the cultural spaces wherein people occupy (Gardner and Mind 2012). Children today face many restrictions on their whereabouts and there are many places within society which are deemed as ‘children’s’ places, such as schools, daycares, parks, suburban homes, locations of designated commercial play such as Chuck-E-Cheese and toy stores (Fog Olwig and Gollov 2003). Under the modern ideas of childhood, work is not an appropriate local for children and this is widely understood in the fields. The fields are actually a rather important location to study how children might feel in relation to belonging because most studies even with migrant children are done in locales that are appropriate for children. Fog Olwig and Gullov argue that one of the reasons why there has been a more drastic focus on specifically designated children’s places as locations of study is simply because it is easier to access (2003). These specific spaces for children do not mean that the other physical locations children inhabit are any less important to than those that are designated for children. These spaces in which children live need to be recognized as not just a local space contingent upon local cultural and political realms, but also contingent upon global relations.
Researching spaces which are socially inappropriate for children to inhabit may actually be able to inspire a new dialogue about children and childhood. By understanding both children’s and adults’ meanings attached to these places which children are inhabiting we can investigate how children are able to explore belonging. Place becomes central to the topic of belonging precisely because these children negotiate many different places both socially and physically in their search for a place to belong. According to Olga Nieuwenhuys middle class western values inform the physical locations of children which are segregated from the adult locale usually out of justification about children’s safety and innocence (2003). Children who spend their time outside of spaces which are deem ‘safe’, and socially appropriate for children risk being seen as out of place and out of childhood, (Nieuwenhuys 2003). Places become ways to barter belonging. The farms in which I did my fieldwork, referred to as simply ‘the fields’, are one place which is socially inappropriate space for children, yet regardless children still inhabit the fields.

‘Your hands are not made for (working in) the fields.’

There was a very strict mindset from the migrant parents that the fields were no places for children particularly when they are too young to work. However, the children in this study were fairly often brought to the fields when there was no other ‘option.’ This usually meant children would be brought when the parents had to work and the children were not in school, or when they did not have someone else to watch them. The five parents who brought their children with them to the fields while I was doing my field work consisted of one single father whose wife was ‘sick,’ and two sets parents. I essentially had three family groups from which to analyze.

One set of the parents were very reluctant to fully acknowledge that their children were even in the fields with them. Artemio and Alicia were working on a construction project throughout
part the field work and participant observation with them and their two kids. Because of this, often their children were not ‘in the fields’ per se, but actually inside an almost finished building. In fact for the duration of my field work with them the kids were almost always inside the building. My field work was limited in part because their ‘job’ essentially ended when all their tasks within the house was completed such as painting certain rooms, installing light fixtures, installing tile and other things primarily for aesthetics. The parents made statements to distance their children from the fields such as, “My kids, they don’t work. They have a good life. Go to school, have good doctors, they don’t work (Artemio).”

One of the few concerns that Alicia discussed with her husband was in relation to the fields and her kids, in which Alicia said, “They have so much a better life. Here they have computadores in the classrooms and our kids have so much more than in Mexico. You know they are not in the fields, they do not work.” This was in response to my question, “What does your child like to do in their free time?” Alicia has very little free time of her own. When she gets home, she cooks dinner then cleans up after dinner, gets the kids off to bed and makes food for her family’s lunch the following day. So, perhaps my question about kids and their free time in the fields was rather impossible for her to think about or this could have been her way of protecting her children from the intrusion of an outsider (me). Alicia and Artemio are obviously well aware of what a ‘proper’ place is for their children, and by distancing their children from the ‘work’ aspect of the fields; they are attempting to sustain the fields as a dignified place for their children.

This brings up an interesting part of my participant observation. Work and the fields were in contrast to the children’s actual physical place, although the children were not in fact working like the parents were working. If we consider ‘work’ to be something that results in the economic
aids of a household, then the children were most definitely working, because they were lowering the cost of childcare for their parents. Alicia, told me that the person who ‘a veces’ watches her children has started wanting ‘too much’ money. When they can bring their children to the fields with them, they do. She makes sure to say that it is rare that they have to bring their children. Throughout my time with Adriana and Emmanuel their mother had been picking them up from school and bringing them back to work with her on most days for multiple weeks. In fact because they knew that my focus was on the children, I was actually told what days they expected to bring their children. Also, from my own knowledge of knowing Artemio and Alicia, as long as they have had their kids they have on occasion brought them to work when needed. Work for them means that they are working and if the kids are not working then they are not at work. Therefore the place in which their children are, when they are working, is not in fact work according to the parents.

According to Artemio and Alicia the children are actually in a socially appropriate space, because they are not actively working the same way that Artemio and Alicia are working. Artemio and Alicia are able to spatially separate themselves while at work in the fields from their children which also indicates that Artemio and Alicia have created socially appropriate spaces for their children, even when their children are physically at work with them. Their children are still occupying socially appropriate spaces even within the confines of actually being at a physical location which is socially incompatible with childhood.

Marcela and Juan acknowledged that their children had to be in the fields sometimes, but continually referenced the temporality of it, and had expectations that they would not have to continue bringing their children. I spent two nearly full days with Samuel and Maria, and their parents, both on Saturdays, and one day that ended up being only a couple of hours. I also
interviewed Sam and Maria’s older sister in a fairly brief thirty minute interview separately. My
time with Sam and Maria was spent almost entirely outside. Since it was early spring, it was
very wet, often rainy and fairly cold. Because of the fact that these children throughout the time
I was there were much closer in proximity to their parents’ work and they were quite literally ‘in
the fields’, may have had something to do with Marcela and Juan’s more ready
acknowledgement of their children being in the fields.

According to Marcela, “Unlike others who bring the kids a lot, we only bring them when we
need to.” Thus necessity for Juan and Marcela turned out to be on the weekends. They, unlike
Artemio and Adriana, paid a babysitter who was female kin. Because they paid her, she had
essentially set hours. Gaby would seem like the next logical choice but Marcela and Juan allow
her to participate and actually encourage her to participate in many school activities, so they
described that she is busy, but she does care for them when she can. Marcela and Juan
continually referenced their prime importance on the farm that they were working on and that
they essentially were given the responsibility of a lot of the off season maintenance while the
people who owned the farm were out of the state. This is why they would sometimes have to
come to work on Saturdays. Juan said a few times, “Work never stops on a farm. There is
always work to do.” Though, Juan and Marcela were cautious to say that the children had ‘never
had to work in their life.’ They also contradicted their own words and said that their older
children had in fact worked in the fields sometimes, but they acknowledged feeling bad about it.
Their son Sam had an interesting insight into coming to the fields with his parents. He was
actually the youngest of all the participants at 5 years old. I asked him what his favorite thing to
do in the world is, and Samuel immediately responded, “Not being here!” Sam’s response quite
simply, reflects all five of the children who I did field work with. Though Sam often made
trouble for his sister in the field, such as by running away from her when they were supposed to be following their parents or staying put somewhere, he was also incredibly creative with his activities in the field.

In the two and half days I spent with them, Sam seemed to be the instigator of some unique games such as one where he and his sister would exchange small rocks, twigs or other earthly things between one another. They would barter with each other about what the things were, and how much they should be worth. For instance, in one game where I was invited to play, we crouched down near the ground after we each ‘gathered’ what we thought was important. When we came back together we told each other what each item was, Sam had Legos (rocks), blueberries (different rocks), and a gun (a stick). Maria had piece of bubble gum (soda can lid) and Cheetos (a handful of rocks). I had a rock and a twig- both given to me by Sam. He offered to ‘help’ me, since apparently I didn’t know what to do. He declared my rock a hot wheel car and my twig became a doll, because as he put it, “You’ll probably like dolls.” This game commenced by us bartering to trade a handful of Cheetos for the doll, and blueberries for some bubblegum. Within a couple rounds of this both Sam and Maria were already mixing their ‘goods’ up. They made up new things that their items could be, and this game continued. These interesting unique games seemed quite common for Sam and Maria while in the fields with their parents. Katz described children’s games as not simply reproduction of adult world but of invention (2004). In this instance, Sam’s invention of this game allowed both he and his sister to pick ‘things’ out that they like and allowed them both to have it. In the ‘real’ world they could not so easily grab some Cheetos or a Lego.

Pedro described bringing his daughter to work with him as a fact of life, though he also wished she could be somewhere else. This father seemed to be somewhat unique from other
migrant farmworkers because he was a man bringing his child. This was seen by the other workers as out of the normal field for a Mexican man. Other men, including the gatekeeper, poked fun at him through calling him feminine names. For the relatively short time I spent with Pedro and Natalia the other men seemed to also respect him as a great protector of his family. Caring for his daughter through bringing her to work with him was not seen as women’s work so much as it was seen as a man’s responsibility to take care of his family. Because Pedro was given social leniency in bringing his daughter to work with him this might have been why he seemed to acknowledge that his daughter was in fact out of a socially appropriate zone for children. During my time with Natalia she expressed that being in the field was ‘not fun,’ but she understood that it was part of familial duty, though this actually brings up another idea of childhood. Even at just 6 years old Natalia understands one of the tenets of childhood in which everything is supposed to be fun.

Olivia recalled that her parents would never allow her to be in the fields. Her father repeatedly told, “Your hands are not made for the field.” Olivia is very prideful of the fact she has never been in the fields with her parents or on her own. Though she still feels connections with the fields stating, “My parents from generations back, we’re farm workers. I still know how, even though I’ve never worked in the fields, I’m pretty sure I could figure it out. I could.” Olivia’s father’s has helped instill in her along with her own idealizing of childhood that show childhood as an inherently safe domain which is free from adult responsibilities (Horton, 2008). Olivia’s bond to the fields also reflects a sense of belonging for her. The physical place of the ‘fields’ for Olivia served an incredibly important social role for her. The fields help her stay connected to her family. For Olivia the fields are a source of contradiction which offers her both a sense of belonging and also a place that is inappropriate for her to be at.
Melissa recalled her mother taking her to her place of work. Her mother worked at a cannery and Melissa had to stay in the car while her mother worked. Melissa explained that this was important to ‘save money at the babysitter.’ Melissa did not dwell on this fact, instead when discussing this she stated it concretely and simply. Melissa saw this as an extension of her home duties; she was saving her mother from having to pay a babysitter even though her sacrifices placed her in the world of a non-typical childhood. In reference to her childhood memories such as these Melissa said, “I didn’t have too many good memories growing up.”

The children with whom I did participant observation all had very similar ideas to one another. The children reflected the view that Melissa held regarding coming to the fields with their parents as simply a fact of life, though a ‘boring’ one. Though the girls were similarly not pleased with having to come to the fields, they also saw it as an act of duty for their household. Because they all wanted to be ‘good girls’ they simultaneously voiced opposition to being in the fields and a firm understanding that they are contributing their duty to the house this way. The children are extremely aware that this is not a proper place for them, which appears to be why they feel able to voice opposition. Much like Olivia stated her connection to the field, all of the children of migrant farmworkers find belonging within their families in the duties required of them. The children serve a specific purpose to their household and they understand the importance of their role in benefiting the family. Though the children all stated to me their disdain for this work, they simultaneously felt proud of it.

Olwig and Gullov say, “The notion of proper places for children does not just refer back to idealized pasts with which adults can identify, but also forward to equally idealized futures that, it is hoped, are in store for children as well as adults. Thus, the kinds of places that society allows children will, to a great extent, influence their ability to develop new social and cultural contexts
of life that do not just reflect the existing social order of which they are part, but rather carry the potential to modify this order (2003:3).” Though social rules would not allow the children in the fields they were in fact in the fields. Since the children knew that this was no place for them, the children and adults made reason as to why they had to endure it. All participants emphasized the future continually, of either how in the future they won’t have to bring their kids, or the kids would idolize doing something else in the future, or going on vacations instead of being with their parents in the fields. This all lead to idealizing the future, and allowed them to cope with being in a socially inappropriate place.

**Belonging through Consumptive Futures and Desires**

The children’s own voices illustrate that they claim belonging through desiring to consume things. Though the children all desired things now, they saw belonging as occurring through this consumption as in the future. This last theme is a way to ‘escape’ from the previous two themes. The idea of having a ‘non-childhood’ sets the stage for lacking belonging. This theme follows attachments and longings toward consumption in the here and now and also in the future.

Children emphasized belonging through imaging consuming things that they desire in the future. The future held out never ending opportunities for the children of migrant farmworkers. In the future the children were free to dream and desire about what toys they wanted, what kind of electronic gadgets they wanted, where they wanted to go on vacation- or simply dreaming about having a vacation, going to the movies, going out to dinner at a restaurant, being able to go to their friends’ houses, being able to buy what they wanted and not having to work like their parents. Surprisingly within their imagined future, not one person imagined not having adult responsibilities. Instead, they saw their responsibilities as character building. Gaby described that the responsibilities “made me who I am.” These desires were predominantly material
comforts, and signifiers of a ‘modern’ lifestyle. This imagined future full of consumptive desires was how the children of migrant farmworkers built attachments to their future.

The desire to consume was not just about the future, it was also very much desired more immediately. On one of the several days during field work that was spent outside it was particularly cold and windy. On this day I was with Sam, Maria and their parents. While their parents worked together on repairing a trellis. The children were far enough away from their parents that they could play, but close enough to their parents that they were neither out of eye sight or ear sight. There was ample room to roam around the mostly empty farm, minus the few part time year round employees doing other minor tasks in early spring. I had been trying to chit chat with the kids but it had been noticeably colder, windier and rainier than the day before which made their attention focus less on me and more on the elements. Sam told me that we shouldn’t talk anymore, instead we should text. I said ok, how? I was the only one with a phone, and although his parents had a phone it did not appear that they could simply take their parents phone for their own using. Sam asked for my notebook. I had figured out with Emmanuel and Adriana that my notebook can be a methodology in more ways than simply allowing me to take notes. Unlike Emmanuel, Sam did not seem hugely interested in my notebook so his request for my notebook seemed out of the ordinary. I had actually offered Sam and his sister to write in my notebook or draw in my notebook which even on the first day of meeting me it seemed to open up a lot of beneficial avenues and trust. Back to the events of the day, Sam asked for my notebook, and then he asked if it was ok if he ripped in his words ‘some pages’. I said ok just not all of them. With my notebook in his hands he squatted down, and went to work. His sister, who had just been quietly listening to this exchange with her arms folded and appearing to shiver slightly, also squatted next to her brother. When she saw what he was doing she said, “You’re
making a phone!” She began to give him instructions on what to do and what ‘kind’ of a phone to make. His sister told him to make the one with games on it. Their interchange was primarily in Spanish. It seemed when they would notice me they would change back to English. Throughout this day, perhaps because I was there, and the parents really did not know me the father would peek back or say something to the kids every so often.

When Sam finished he had a roughly half page of paper sized phone with the letters of the alphabet on there in a close shape to a keyboard, which his sister helped him with. He used the notebook as part of the phone and we began as Sam described to ‘texted’. This consisted of him and his sister typing out messages and when they were done they would hand it either to each other, or to me. After they handed the phone to me the first time, I said so what does your text say? Sam told me what is says but then he told me that is not how this works. You just ‘read’ my text and hand it back. Eventually this ‘game’ turned into, ‘I draw something on the ‘phone’ and then you draw something’, and it goes round and round. Sam and Maria seemed to enjoy this enough to occupy a good chunk of time and liked to banter back and forth about the things they were ‘texting’ on their phone. This worked only until it really started to rain, and then their mother actually came back and shuffled them back to the main barn while her husband finished up the work. Sam said later on in the same day, “When I’m older I’m going to make a lot of money and get a real phone like that! And it’s going to have games…and things.”

This particular event seemed to bring Sam much joy. In Sam’s imaginings of participating in the consumer culture he also inadvertently created his own item to consume. He emphasized both a longing in the here and now, and as well in the future. Sam’s references to the future were about what ‘things’ he was going to get. By doing this, Sam is establishing himself as a good consumer, which according to Zelizer part of the current mold of childhood is to build consumers
Katz argues that childhood today is actually a ‘spectacle,’ meaning that goal of childhood is to accumulate capital as much as you can, until one collapses (2008). In this sense, modern childhood is training consumers. Children should desire things. Sam is only beginning his emergence into consumer culture though his desires for consuming things speaks to him as a consumer in training. Though he cannot participate in the spectacle of childhood, the project of childhood has trained him to believe in the spectacle and one day to take part in it.

Emmanuel is also a consumer in training, much like Sam. Emmanuel focuses much of his play on various commodities that he does not have. On another afternoon in which Emmanuel and Adriana were inside the unfinished room, I had been talking with Adriana about the birds that she liked and we were watching them out the window. Emmanuel had been drawing for a few minutes when all the sudden he starts making tapping noises. He was very pleased with himself and showed his sister his creation, and wanted to show his mother, but his sister stopped him. His mother heard him and answered him though she quickly reminded him to play and stay put. Emmanuel had made a tablet which he was using. He told me tablets are really cool because you can put all the games on them you want and you can watch movies. He said he really wants one. I asked him if he’s ever played with one and who he knows that has one. He said lots of people have them, but he’s only ever seen them on TV to other people using them. He continued describing his desire to have a real table one day.

Emmanuel also was very fond of video games that he saw on TV. He very much desired a video game, not realizing the extent to how they work, that you also need something to play the game on. This thesis began with a story from field work in which Emmanuel is drawing video game characters and his sister is trying to get him to play ‘teacher’ with her, a game in which she is the teacher and Emmanuel is the student. Emmanuel clearly showed disdain for this game by
flat out ignoring his sister when she would tell him what to do and instead Emmanuel simply continued drawing. Continuing with this story from my field notes as follows:

When he continued to draw, Adriana warned him to always obey the teacher. When he continued not listening she took his paper away quickly accidentally ripping it in two. Her face turned to a frown and she apologized immediately. But it was too late, tears started flowing and soon enough Alicia was in the room. Adriana was quickly apologizing and saying she didn’t intend to rip the paper. Alicia grabbed Adriana and took her into a different area of the building. After Alicia left, Emmanuel’s tears dried up and he asked for another piece of paper and he began redrawing his video game figures.

Emmanuel was quite pleased with himself that by the time Adriana came back he made another video game character for her and for me. These events seemed to signify Emmanuel’s insurgence into consumer culture. He clearly desires these things but does not have them. He and Sam have actually invented ways to participate without having the actual objects of desire. This type of unique agency shows that Emmanuel is not simply waiting for consumption or modern childhood ideals to fall into his lap, but instead he is actively creating ways that he is actually able to participate in consumption and childhood. This is indeed very creative way to intrude into consumerism.

Adriana expresses longing and desires for belonging through consumptive practices. Adriana had an assignment in school in which she had to write about ‘what makes her happy.’ She showed me her paper one day after school. It went like this.

I am going to tell you what makes me happy. First, playing with my Barbie’s make me happy. Second, going to Chuck E Cheese makes me happy. That is what makes me happy.”

I asked her about this and if she has a Barbie, and she does. She has one Barbie. She has not been to Chuck E Cheese, but her friends have been there. She languidly expressed about how it would
make her happy to go there too. I asked her, “What else makes you happy? Is there anything at home or with your family that makes you happy?

Adriana: “Well, at home, it’s hard because there is not so much time. And we have to clean the house. I would be happy though if we could spend more time together and go places together.”

Ashley Crawford: “Like where?”

Adriana: “Like restaurants, or on vacations. You know, one of my friends just went to Disneyland. She is so lucky.”

Adriana’s desires for things rooted in consumerism such as vacationing, going to Disneyland and going to Chuck E Cheese all are considered proper places of childhood within U.S. consumerism culture. These places stood in huge contrast to the place we stood in talking about Adriana’s hopes and dreams, which was an unfinished room that will one day be meant to serve people much better off than her or I. Nevertheless, Adriana desires these things addressing them partly as a method of family bonding. Though these examples can certainly showcase her aspirations to belong within a consumer driven world they are also examples of declaring a proper place for family attachments and belonging. Adriana’s consumer desires were always in relation to spending time with her family.

Gaby, Sam and Maria’s older sister also reiterated the idea of going places as a family. Gaby describes life-long yearnings as follows:

I always wished, when I was younger, well even now, that we could spend real quality time together. We never go out to a restaurant, like other family’s do. I think other families take little stuff like that for granted.

Both Adriana and Gaby see going out to places as something of high importance, which reflects the consumptive culture. Gaby sees her parents every day. She helps out on a daily basis and
provides much of the family’s transportation needs. She also mentioned waking early and helping her mom make lunches. None of these everyday interactions seemed of as much importance to her as doing things that cost money as a family.

Olivia offered a reflection of her childhood and the yearnings she had as a child. She describes one instance in which she’s talking with some friends from CAMP about when they were kids.

Man, sometimes I wonder what it would’ve been like if we weren’t farm worker kids. Like yeah…I’ve wondered that too…like I wonder what it is like to actually go to a store and pick out something you wanted, like that you really wanted, like clothes or a toy or something, like yeah dude! Like do you ever wonder that? Yeah!

Olivia’s narrative of reflecting back on this idea of imagining getting a toy as a child is inherent in the idea that belonging is rooted in consumption. Interestingly however, there are some inconsistencies. When describing a visit with her family to Mexico Olivia says,

Rarely, did my parents ever deny anything I asked in Mexico. Rarely. Like, if I wanted a toy, I got a toy. If I wanted a snack in the streets, I got a snack. That’s when I felt like, all three of us were daddy’s little princesses, and he had a hard time saying no. And my mom was just always smiling. Dressed up. With makeup, and her jewelry and we’d go out to places and it was just…it felt like you were breathing new air.

Olivia only did not get to participate in the consumer culture when in the United States. Ironically however, when in Mexico she and her family were able to show off their U.S. ‘wealth.’ Olivia showed both an imaginary consumption, in which she is day dreaming about picking out toys as a child in the US, and also a real consumption practices while she and her family were in Mexico. When in Mexico, Olivia reiterates that her family discusses the prosperity they have back in the states and the affluence of rich products available to them,
which overall helps define the creation of a space of belonging within both her imaginary and real worlds.

All of the children expressed desires for various toys, not just any toys though, the ones that ‘all the kids’ wanted, the video games, doll houses, tablets Barbie dolls and Legos for example. Migrants seem to have a deep understanding that instant prosperity is just simply not an option for them. However, many field workers and their families work for a brighter tomorrow hoping the future will lead to fulfillment of their desires. Whether it was drawing, a toy they wanted, or drawing themselves playing with the toy, or imagining they have a certain toy and creating a game out of it, or ‘creating’ the toy they wanted out of something, or simply stating that they wanted a toy, all the kids signified that they desired toys they did not have. Even the young adults expressed this desire from when they were children. This idealizing of the future seemed to justify their current dispositions. Belongings appeared most tangible asset to attain in the future.

One of the discrepancies within this study is that the children all claim a lack of belonging due to their lack of consumer items. Forming a discourse of contradictions, the children by being so heavily focused on the latest consumer products and desires for commercial consumption actually created a space of belonging for themselves. Their desires are appropriate according to the social constructions of modern childhood. Katz argues that the current state of childhood is a spectacle in which children are supposed to desire to consume things until the point of collapse (2008). These children cannot actually accumulate items to the point of collapse and neither can the majority of American youth. This idea of childhood as spectacle is part of the development of the modern neoliberal world in which capital accumulation is valued over family values, moral or ethical values (Katz 2008, Mills 2001 and Horton 2008). Through the expansive
globalization of knowledge and values, this capital accumulation has already begun to be a major value and goal of people in Mexico (Stephen 2007).

Neoliberal structuring of the world has played a heavy part in the increased desires for children to be consumers (Mohanty 2003 and Horton 2008). The goal of the neoliberal structuring of the world was ultimately to increase profit, and for the very wealthy who own or control much of the global wealth it has (Kingsolver 2007 and Mohanty 2003). A consequence of neoliberal structuring has been increased poverty and huge inequity. Children are strong consumers with neoliberal structuring because they can contribute to increased profits through their active consumer activities (Zelizer 1985). The neoliberal structuring of the world encourages children as consumers for the goal of increased profits (Katz 2003, Katz 2008 and Horton 2008). Because the neoliberal policies, most notably the North American Free Trade Agreement created increasing levels of poverty more children are unable to participate in the spectacle of childhood though more children desire it (Katz 2008). Though these children desire this consumer focused childhood, the inequity caused by the neoliberal structuring of society makes their goals incredibly unlikely. However by desiring to be a consumer they are playing into the values of a modern lifestyle.

**Consumption as a ‘border’ crossing**

Lynn Stephen’s describes that migrants live transborder lives in which they are continually negotiating their livelihoods across multiple borders (2007). The lives of the children of migrant farmworkers were profoundly transborder (2007). The globalization of the global north into the global south has had profound impacts on the consumptive desires of those in the global south. When the migrants arrive in the US, these same desires avail however one may not be able to
meet all of the consumptive desires while in the US. Consumption becomes a border from which migrants are continually negotiating across.

This research gave insight for these particular child migrants, who varied in age and location, belonging attempts were created and continued in relation to consumptive practices, which was negotiated through the medium of childhood. Their worth and sense of belonging are under an umbrella of commodification and consumption (Katz 2008). The child and young adult migrants want to belong and they even feel they belong. Regardless of if they are with people or places, their understandings of belonging co-exist with consuming and accumulating. Even though many if not most do not yet have these consumer items yet, they still believe in the future that they will. The children and young adult migrant’s lives are always placed in alliance with consumer practices that haven’t actually been practiced. They are consumers in the making. They justify their belonging based on having the ability to consume whether or not they have actually consumed what they desire.

The children’s transborder lives include moral boundaries, intergenerational boundaries, and interethnic boundaries (Stephen 2007). The children ambiguously claim that they do not belong, yet are keenly focused on consumer practices, which alternatively is an observed example of the children crossing an ethnic and moral border. Mindful that this discussion has been based around the participant children and corresponding participant adult voices, this ethnography is therefore weighted more toward their conceptualization of belonging according to them in accordance to how they respond to questions and time spent with me, a young non-Mexicana female researcher who is an outsider. They all responded to me in certain socially accepted ways. Had I been a Mexicana young lady I am suspect I would have received responses showing their allegiance to their family more so than to consumerist ideals. I myself, represent a border
that the participants navigated. Their sense of belonging and retelling of how they fit in was
negotiated based on who they were telling their experiences to.

The children’s interactions all changed dramatically around their parents, especially when they
talked about their home life, their school life, and their time in Mexico. These children are
continually crossing borders and negotiating their lives in accordance with the situation at hand.

In discussing my results section, I am going to provide a deeper look into the children’s worlds
that show belonging is not necessarily non-existent or in some far off place, like these children
stated. Instead, these children actually are extremely skillful in finding belonging.

**Generations are not concrete**

A prominent result from this research is the idea that migrants do not fit into the generational
dives according to assimilation modeling (Portes and Rivas 2011, Portes 2008). The results
from this study have debunked the current segmented assimilation theory, which categorizes
migrants into generations. The children of migrant farmworkers do not fit into the classification
of second generation migrants in many ways. Their parents, most of whom would be called first
generation migrants also do not fit into the prescribed characteristics of first generation migrants.

One of the defining features of the second generation is of being a ‘cultural broker’ for their
parents. Children play the role of cultural brokers for their migrant parents primarily by
translating for them. In this study all of the migrant parents that I did participant observation
with spoke English fluently. Their children did not need to be the cultural brokers for them.
Juan and Marcela learned English while attending school in Oregon as children. Artemio and
Alicia learned English from their many years in the fields interacting with other English
speakers. Ramon was sent to community college by one of his bosses from the fields to learn
English. One of the defining features of the first generation is the expectation that the majority
will not speak English fluently. My research shows that the idea that first generation migrants cannot or will not learn English is entirely false. It was relatively easy to find first generation migrants who spoke English. These simple characteristics disrupt a small part of the idea of the characteristics of first and second generation.

Another characteristic of the second generation is that they will be less connected to their receiving country, while the first generation will be more connected. In segmented assimilation theories second or subsequent generations may stay connected to their ethnic culture due to ethnic enclaves. Within this study, most participants did not live in an ethnic enclave. However, all of the children of migrant farmworkers maintained strong connections with their family in Mexico and with their ancestral heritage.

All of the participants identified themselves as ‘Mexicano, or Mexicana or Mexican’ at some point throughout their interviews or field work. All of the children of the migrant farmworkers spoke highly of their family in Mexico and desired continued connection with them. Both Melissa and Olivia stressed the importance of keeping the Mexican traditions alive in their future children. They both returned to Mexico to spend considerable time throughout their childhood. Olivia went there nearly every year of her childhood. Melissa spent almost a full year in Mexico as a child. Sam and Maria have also spent summers in Mexico. Adriana and Emmanuel have visited a couple times. Surprisingly, I heard more about Mexican heritage and traditions from the children of the migrant farmworkers than from the migrant farmworkers themselves. Still the parents are owed much recognition for instilling desire in their children to retain their Mexican traditions and heritage. Migrant families in this project have taken ample steps to make sure that their children retain their Mexicanness.
The varied migration experiences of Juan and Marcela, the parents of Lorena, Samuel and Maria, also serve to complicate migrant generations. Juan and Marcela met while they were attending high school in Willamette Valley in the mid 1990’s. Juan had come to join his uncle, who had received amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. Marcela migrated with her family as a child and attended middle and high school in Oregon. Juan and Marcela’s story highlights an uncharted experience of migrants. What is unusual about Juan and Marcela, who worked in agricultural fields of the mid-Willamette valley as children, is they decided to go back to Mexico together.

Juan explained that one of his other family members had started his own business back in Mexico and asked for his help in the daily business operations. Juan and Marcela described the potential benefits of going back to Mexico. They saw returning to Mexico as an opportunity for success and bits of freedom, compared to the muscle aching work in the fields. Juan and Marcela went back to Mexico together where they married. Unfortunately, the uncle’s business did not pan out and Juan and Marcela were left unemployed. This expenditure in Mexico served to fuel Juan’s belief that Mexico had no decent job opportunities. Juan and Marcela returned to the United States, where they first went to California and worked in the grapes, eventually working their way up to Oregon and settling more permanently into the Willamette Valley. While they were in Mexico Marcela became pregnant and had their first child, Lorena. Juan described his daughter’s birth as one of their main motivations for returning to the USA, in other words for the future benefit of their children. When they returned from Mexico Marcela was pregnant with their second child and had Gaby in the United States.

This example of Juan and Marcela’s migration puts holes into the idea of stable generations. Juan and Marcela were both children when they came to the United States the first time. Thus
they were seemingly classified as one and a half generation migrants. A One and a half generation migrant is a term used for children that have been brought to the United States between the ages of 5 and 15. These migrants are thought to be more similar to second generation migrants in their acculturation or assimilation levels. It is highly unexpected that they would decide to relocate back to their sending country only to return to the United States years later. When Marcela and Juan returned to the United States on their own as adults they possibly could have been termed first generation migrants. However, they had already lived in the USA for a few years as children, so how exactly would we place them into a generation? Where they now solely first generation migrants? Or are they still considered one and a half generation migrants? Even more perplexing what were their children? Was Lorena a second generation migrant or is she a one and a half generation migrant? This example muddies the waters of migrant generations because it is not a clear cut path to generational divide. How might we begin to have a conversation about the belonging of migrants, if they do not even fit into these prescribed notions that are supposed to mediate some notion of national belonging?
7. Conclusions and Future Directions

The children of Mexican migrant farmworkers reject the notions of belonging perpetuated by the state and instead craft their own belongings within various moral worlds. The children of migrant farmworkers are incredibly complex, mobile and contradictory. These children have found ways to redefine notions of belonging while resisting notions of belonging utilized by the state. Children of Mexican migrant farmworkers continually cross boundaries of their moral and social worlds while also negotiating belonging both within the consumer laden world of the modern childhood and beyond. This research has shown children’s negotiations with the neoliberal consumer world, and also their resistance to it. These children of migrant farmworkers easily transition from children to adult worlds on a daily basis. Though the children claim to desire the consumer driven childhoods, their actions are often contradictory. The extreme mobility and flexibility of their lives allows for these children to cross multiple borders on a daily basis.

The children of migrant farmworkers strongly desire the consumer comforts of a modern childhood. This proved unattainable for them in their everyday lives as their social worlds were filled with family obligations. Most of the children described feeling as though they do not belong in their social worlds because of the unfulfilled desire for the consumer driven modern childhood. This represented a moral clash between the material reality of their everyday life and what they believed to be the American childhood. The children believed that in the future they would be able to reconcile their moral clashes by being able to participate in the consumer culture. However, the children have actually created multiple spaces for belonging for themselves in all of their social worlds. As a younger American ‘white’ woman, I represented someone who might have the type of childhood the children of migrant farmworkers longed for.
Therefore the image that the children of migrant farmworkers displayed to me was based upon their own understanding of my moral world. When interacting with their parents or talking about their parents with me, the children of migrant farmworkers all showed ample respect towards their family and indicated their unwavering devotion to their family. The role that they occupy within their family is vital to the family well-being but more so it is vital to the children’s belonging within the family. By creating these spaces of belonging, these children are continually crossing various ethnic, moral and social borders with ease. Although these children claim that they do not belong, they actually navigated the dynamics of many different social settings to find a space that they feel attachments and belonging.

The children of migrant farmworkers were socially isolated in many ways, though they were also very connected. Even if the children had friends at school, often they felt very socially isolated because their friendships were restricted to school. However, in another way the children were very socially connected to their relatives back in Mexico. The children may not have communicated with their relatives on a daily basis, but for the duration of my fieldwork and interviews, the relatives in Mexico were a constant source of discussion. Regardless of whether or not they had actual interaction with their family in Mexico, the children regarded them as if they were connected to their everyday lives.

The children of migrant farmworkers live extremely complex lives which complicates and challenges assimilation and designations of a migrant generation. Because assimilation is about integrating into the United States society, we can see how assimilation is very much akin to belonging on a wider scale. Assimilation targets specific characteristics and traits which are seen as vital to fitting into the US society (Basanez 2010, Haikkola 2011, Portes and Rivas 2011). These children cannot be placed into migrant generations easily as they defy their status of
second generation through their uniquely intricate lives. Throughout field work, some of the children’s daily lives consisted of playing in buildings that were under construction or running through the agricultural fields while their parents worked. While these children do not work for pay they are aiding their household economically through means that are really unheard of and revolutionary. The second generation is usually expected to aid the household but it is typically through wage labor. It is important to recognize that these children are aiding their families by accompanying their parents to work. Another way these children defy the designated generation is because most of these children do not need to translate for their parents due to their parents’ English fluency. This research was conducted in English and serves as a testament to the fact that children of migrant farmworkers and the migrant farmworkers do not fit into their prescribed generations.

This research has breached the sanctity of generational divides and this is important because the language of assimilation and generations are notions used by the state (Aguiire and Simmers 2012 and Haikkola 2011). Migrant generational divides are used as the basis of nearly every policy decision and every major educational decision about migrants (Aguirre and Simmers 2012, Portes 2008 and Stephen 2007). The current national dialogue about migrant children is flawed and potentially dangerous because of the inconsistencies regarding assimilation and migrant generations. Assimilation and generations are important to migrant children because they symbolize the way in which the state defines how one does or does not belong. The participants of this study all defied their would-be generation. Juan and Marcela’s unique migration made it all the more difficult to organize them into a generation. The intense discrimination and racial prejudices towards Mexican migrants is being intensified through ideas of assimilation and generations to determine who does and does not fit (Howie Jr 2014 and
Cisneros 2014). This thesis has indicated that even the first generation migrants have taken on many traits which are usually reserved for second or subsequent generations. Simply categorizing people into generational divides is not going to accurately describe who has integrated into the US society. The results from this thesis indicate that it is very difficult to place migrants into categorizations by generation. The migrants in this study all created their own ways to belong across various moral, ethnic and generational borders both within the United States and beyond.

**Future Directions**

**Generational divides**

Further research into generations and assimilation is vital to the well-being of thousands of migrant children. The results from this thesis indicating the breakdown of the usefulness of generational divides calls into question the appropriate path to determine how migrants’ belong on a national scale. Future research needs to question the validity and stability of migrant generations. Specifically, future research needs to address other options for understanding belonging on a national scale that is less discriminatory and racist.

**Gendered Belongings**

One of the things I did not get to explore from this research more in depth was the gendered order of belonging. Because my research was so heavily influenced by the female voices, it was difficult to dissect what was different about the boys versus the girls based on legitimate differences or just a lack of voice. In future research on migrant children as active social actors, it would be necessary to determine the gendered ordering of their belongings. Some interesting questions might be: Is there a difference in how male versus female child migrants relate to consumptive desires in relation in the future or the here and now? Is there a difference in the
type of consumption that male versus female child migrant’s desire? How do male child
migrants relate to place and emplacement compared to female child migrant’s
conceptualizations?
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Appendices
Appendix A: Semi-formal interview questions for young adult migrants

1) What was your best memory as a child?

2) What did you like to do as a child?

3) What kinds of games did you play?

4) Do you remember a favorite game?

5) Who were your friends?

6) What were your friends like?

7) What did you do with your friends?

8) Did you play with your friends at school?

9) What did you do after school?

10) What did your friends do after school?

11) What did your family do after school?

12) In a couple minutes time, walk me through a typical day of yours as a child.

13) Describe your family for me.

14) What kinds of things did you and your family like to do together?

15) What school grades did you complete in Oregon?

16) How did you feel you fit in in school as a child?

17) How did you feel you fit in in your family as a child?

18) How did you feel you fit in with your friends as a child?
Appendix B: Unstructured interview questions/guide for parents of child migrants

1) What does your child like to do?
2) What kinds of games does your child like to play?
3) How does your child typically spend their free time?
4) Does your child have a favorite activity?
5) What kinds of things does your child like to do with their friends?
6) What kinds of things do you like to do with your child?
7) What is one of the best things about your child?
8) What does your child like about school?
9) What does your child like to do in school?
10) What does your child enjoy doing to most and what does your child enjoy doing the least?

Appendix C: Unstructured interview questions/guide for child migrant

1) What kinds of games do you like to play?
2) Do you have a favorite game?
3) What are some other things you like doing?
4) What is your favorite thing in the whole world to do?
5) Tell me about your friends. Who are they?
6) What are your friends like?
7) What do you like to do with your friends?
8) What kinds of games do you play with your friends?
9) Do you play with your friends at school?
10) What do you do after school?

11) What do your friends do after school?

12) What do you and your family like to do after school?

13) What kinds of things do you and your family like to do together?

14) Do you have siblings?

15) What are your siblings like?

16) What are some things you like doing with your siblings?