“CAMP is a Home”: The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program

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“CAMP is a Home”: The Experiences of Migrant Students in a College Assistance Migrant Program

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The researchers explored how the migrant students characterized their experiences in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) program at a predominantly White institution in Georgia and how they developed identity in this qualitative study. Interviews with seven migrant students were transcribed and coded for themes using Baxter Magolda’s theory of self-authorship as the theoretical framework. Participants developed their identities and established self-authorship as migrant students due to the influences and impacts of CAMP and perceived CAMP support as the nexus to their academic success and overcoming barriers. Other themes emerged from the narratives, including disruption of frequent moves, cultural differences, inadequate preparation, and the management of college and family obligations. Discussed are the implications for higher education practice and future research.
Children from migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families are the most disadvantaged of all groups of students in the United States (Ramirez, 2012). They are marginalized and have abundant socioeconomic and academic obstacles (Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018; Garza et al., 2016; Peterson, 2014). MSFWs are among the poorest groups and have the lowest socioeconomic development (Araujo, 2011). In the United States, migrant students experience many barriers that inhibit their educational and economic opportunities (Zalaquett et al., 2007). Migrant students experience academic barriers due to the disruptions of frequent moves and inadequate academic preparation, financial hardships, and lack of exposure to college-educated individuals (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009; O’Connor et al., 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007).

There are an estimated 2.5 to 3 million MSFWs currently working in the United States (National Center for Farmworkers Health, Inc. [NCFH], 2020). However, there is a lack of information about educational programs designed to serve and assist migrant students and track their postsecondary progress and outcomes (Nuñez, 2009). Many scholars have written about Latinx and immigrants’ experiences in higher education, but there is limited literature on migrant students’ pursuit of a college degree (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Nuñez, 2009). One reason for this is that few college students in higher education research come from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds (Araujo, 2011). This study addresses the dearth of research on the migrant student population’s college experiences and makes meaning of their experiences.

**Literature Review**

**College Assistance Migrant Program**

The Office of Economic Opportunity established the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) program as an initiative of President Lyndon Johnson’s Administration (Araujo, 2011; Branz-Spall et al., 2004). As a result of their War on Poverty legislation, the United States Department of Education (DoEd) created the Office of Migrant Education (OME) in 1966 (Branz-Spall et al., 2004). The DoEd established the CAMP program in 1972 to serve students from MSFW families (The National High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant Program CAMP Association [National HEP CAMP Association], 2020).

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

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Migrant Education funded 17 CAMP grant programs in 2021 and 16 CAMP grant programs in 2020 to qualified universities and colleges throughout the United States (DoEd, 2020). The University of North Georgia is the only university with a CAMP program serving migrant college students in Georgia’s north region (DoEd, 2020). In 2015, the DoEd MEP awarded the University of North Georgia the first competitive five-year federal discretionary grant for $2,123,775 to establish CAMP and assist the rapidly growing migrant population in north Georgia (DoEd, 2020; UNG, 2020). The UNG CAMP program serves 35 first-generation migrant students per year transitioning into their first year of college (DoEd, 2020; UNG, 2020). All migrant students accepted into the UNG CAMP program meet the following qualifications for admission: (a) be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours, (b) be a MSFW or the child of a MSFW, (c) be a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident, (d) have earned no more than 23 credit hours, (e) have completed the Federal Application for Student Financial Aid (FASFA), and (f) demonstrates academic, financial, or personal need (DoEd, 2020; UNG, 2020). UNG CAMP participants receive assistance with federal financial aid, stipends, and scholarships to help reduce their financial burden. The CAMP’s stipends also help migrant students with additional costs such as books, school supplies, and personal expenses (UNG, 2020). The CAMP program provides students with various services, including a laptop, academic, career, financial, and personal coaching, tutoring, and academic and social programming.

**Migrant Students in CAMP**

Although there is a paucity of literature on the experiences of migrant students enrolled in CAMP, the few studies conducted on the CAMP program found that CAMP has helped alleviate some of the struggles migrant students experience in pursuing their undergraduate degree (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O’Connor et al., 2020; Wilson & Jang, 2009; 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007). CAMP focuses on the retention of migrant students by providing supplementary support services not often offered in higher education. CAMP conducts intentional
outreach and recruitment of migrant students to enroll them in higher education (Willison & Jang, 2009). The CAMP staff works closely with the college recruiter and high school advisor to get migrant students to consider applying for college and the CAMP program (Willison & Jang, 2009).

To understand migrant students’ experiences in the CAMP program pursuing an undergraduate education, Araujo (2011) conducted a qualitative study and examined the experiences of eight Latinx CAMP students transitioning into their first year of college. Araujo (2011) examined how CAMP was influential in providing migrant students with community cultural wealth and various methods of capital, which included financial, emotional, and academic support services. Araujo’s research also focused on cultural, social, and navigational capital to understand the CAMP students’ experiences in their first year of the program. The migrant students in the study shared concerns regarding how to pay for their college tuition. Migrant students reported not knowing if they could enroll in school because they could not afford college tuition (Araujo, 2011).

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

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

The qualitative research conducted by O’Connor, Mancinas, and Troxel Deeg (2020) investigated the experiences of CAMP students in their first and second years at Arizona State University. The researcher used ethnographic methods to explore the experiences of first-year CAMP students and second-year CAMP alumni (O’Connor et al., 2020). The study sought to understand how CAMP students and alumni developed their academic identities and handled their sense of belonging at the university (O’Connor et al., 2020). CAMP challenged migrant students to examine their academic identities and develop a sense of their individuality and possibilities for their future (O’Connor et al., 2020). With the support of the CAMP staff, migrant students develop a degree of authority and belonging within the university (O’Connor et al., 2020).

**Theoretical Framework**

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

Self-authorship interconnects one’s epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal developmental dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda (2001) identified epistemology growth as how we know or decide what to believe. We distinguished intrapersonal growth as how we know or choose what to believe and interpersonal growth as how we construct relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The intrapersonal dimension is how
individuals view themselves, and the interpersonal dimension is when an individual builds relationships with others, which is often considered beyond the scope of educators (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Individuals’ developmental processes require self-authorship growth on all three dimensions through their late teenage years and early twenties (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The three dimensions explore how individuals know or decide what to believe, view themselves, and construct relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Although establishing one’s self-authorship is a continuous process (Baxter Magolda, 2001), we used this theory to examine the transition of CAMP students during their undergraduate education.

Methods
Using narrative inquiry, the researchers explored the migrant students’ stories and made meaning of their experiences using qualitative methods. Narrative inquiry captured the migrant students’ stories, elevated their voices, and provided awareness of their CAMP program experiences. The following research question guided the study: What are the perceptions and experiences of migrant students who participate in a college migrant program at a predominately White institution (PWI) in Georgia? Through interviews, the stories of these students were captured. Because the unit of analysis was the students’ stories, narrative analysis was used to understand their experience better.

Research Setting
The research setting was the University of North Georgia (UNG), a four-year public research university with an established CAMP program. UNG is a PWI and the only university with a CAMP program serving migrant college students in Georgia’s north region. The CAMP program’s physical space at UNG is on the Gainesville Campus in Oakwood, Georgia. The CAMP’s location is unique because of Gainesville’s sizeable Latinx population. Gainesville’s population is approximately 42,296; about 41% are Latinx, 39% are White – non-Hispanic, 16 are Black – non-Hispanic, and 2% are Asians (U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, 2020).

Data Collection
With assistance from the CAMP Program Director, the primary researcher contacted UNG CAMP program participants to gauge their interest. To gather narratives from those with the most relevant experiences, participants had the following requirements: (1) CAMP students who have completed at least 12 credit hours; (2) they must be first-generation migrant college students; (3) U.S. citizens or permanent residents; and (4) parents are seasonal or migrant farmworkers who have worked in the past 24 months in a
migrant seasonal farm work environment. Thirty-five students met the aforementioned criteria; seven agreed to participate, and all seven were interviewed. Table 1 provides a demographic overview of participants.

Table 1. CAMP Participants’ Demographic Profile Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>1st Semester in CAMP</th>
<th>Self-identified Ethnicity / Origin</th>
<th>Language Spoken in Home</th>
<th>Pre-College Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Alum</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>Latinx/Mexican-American</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Honors/Advanced Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guibert</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Tejano/Mexican Origin</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; English</td>
<td>Honors Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griselda</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
<td>Salvadorian</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>Latinx/Mexican Origin</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Dual Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>Latinx/Mexican Origin</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Dual Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevil</td>
<td>Alum</td>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Advanced Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>Latinx/Mexican Origin</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Advanced Placement in Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants’ demographics are self-disclosed.

**Interviews**

The researchers’ goal was to conduct an in-depth interview, understand and seek the participant’s perspectives on their experience, and make meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). Participants were scheduled for individual interviews using Zoom. An open-ended question approach captured participants’ experiences (Maxwell, 2013). Hence, the primary researcher (PR) engaged with participants and narrated their stories and experiences (Seidman, 2013). In addition, the open-ended question approach provided the context and reconstructed the meaning of the participants’ experiences (Seidman, 2013). The PR used a list of
guiding open-ended questions about the participants’ family and educational backgrounds. The questions also relate to the experiences and involvement with the CAMP program. These questions allowed participants to describe and identify their experiences as CAMP students and ascertain their perception of how the CAMP program shaped their identity development and self-authorship. Examples of such questions include:

- How does being a migrant college student influence your involvement in student organizations and interactions with peers outside the CAMP activities?
- In what ways does being a migrant college student affect your social experiences at the university?

In addition, the PR used clarifying and probing questions throughout the interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Making sense of qualitative analysis entails reducing and sorting important information, identifying patterns, and constructing an open-ended framework to communicate and reveal the essence of the data (Patton, 2015). The data collected from each recorded Zoom interview was transcribed, coded, and labeled. The transcription process began immediately after each interview, and the researcher verified the transcriptions from the recordings.

Saldaña (2016) recommended beginning preliminary coding and jotting once the researcher collects data. Codes were captured in a spreadsheet, organizing direct quotes across narratives among participants. The PR kept a journal and wrote memos to document the participants’ thoughts, feelings, and observations (Peshkin, 1988). The researcher recorded occurrences, participants’ experiences, and reflections with memos. The memos were titled, labeled, and grouped to identify keywords, phrases, and emerging themes in a spreadsheet. The PR compared the individual participants’ data and identified similarities or differences with the qualitative analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

**Trustworthiness**

Maxwell (2013) identified researcher bias and reactivity as two validity threats to a qualitative study. To strengthen the findings’ credibility, the PR acknowledged her subjectivity and personal biases affecting the data collection and analysis. The PR continuously sought to identify their subjectivity, perceptions, and reactions to other populations, both positive and negative. The first author is Peruvian American, a first-generation college student raised in a metropolitan area. Her career experiences allowed her to take positions in higher education to make a
difference in student lives. Before relocating to Georgia, she did not work with migrant students and did not know about MSFW families or the CAMP program. However, she immediately learned how the migrant population was underrepresented and underserved and how essential it was to focus a study on the migrant students participating in CAMP to make meaning of their experiences, share their voices on pursuing a college education, and understand their pre-reflective experiences and their CAMP program experiences.

The second author is White and was a first-generation college student. Prior to serving as a research mentor for this project, she did not know a lot about MSFW families or the CAMP program. She has learned a great deal from being part of this team. The third author is a cisgender, White, first-generation Cuban American, and first-generation college student, but does not come from a MSFW family. As a faculty member and mental health counselor, she has worked with CAMP students for over five years at her institution.

Creswell (2014) explained how maintaining objectivity in a study is essential in competent inquiry. The PR constantly examined their methods and conclusions for bias. Another attempt to minimize threats is identifying and comprehending subjectivities throughout the research process and documenting the PR’s reactions and feelings during data collection and analysis in memos (Peshkin, 1988).

Member-Checking and Triangulation
In addition, to ensure data accuracy, the PR recorded emergent patterns and possible themes, documented and labeled all interviews, filled gaps in the data collected, and protected and secured the data collected. The PR reexamined the interviews, clarified and determined the analysis strategy, monitored the participants’ thought processes and decision-making criteria, and kept an analytical journal. To rule out any misinterpretation regarding the meaning of what participants may say or express, member checking can implore feedback about the data collected from the participants (Creswell, 2014). The PR also presented the transcripts to each participant to confirm accuracy. This process allowed the participants to review their stories and add validation to the analysis. The method of member checking allowed participants to comment on the interview’s findings as well (Creswell, 2014). Transcripts were shared with participants to check for errors and omissions. The participants approved the transcripts and consented to the use of their narratives. Finally, the findings were triangulated across the coding of the interviews, observations, journals, as well as memos to increase reliability,
trustworthiness, and validity (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Findings
The study’s purpose was to fill a gap in the literature by describing how migrant students characterized their experiences in the CAMP program at UNG, a PWI in the South. This study examined participants’ personal stories and experiences in the CAMP program. The participants also reflected and shared their stories before participating in the CAMP program. The data analysis revealed many unexpected themes, including disruption of frequent moves, cultural differences, inadequate preparation, and the management of college and family obligations. Conversely, participants viewed CAMP as an essential factor that influenced their undergraduate education success.

Disruption of Frequent Moves
The disruption of frequent moves was a major factor in Lydia’s and Nevil’s self-definition and self-authorship growth. Each participant had a different primary, middle, and secondary educational experience. The participants constructed these transitory experiences through meaning-making essential to developing their identity and self-authorship.

When recalling academic challenges leading up to their time in CAMP, two participants shared similar experiences with the disruption of frequent moves and continuous change in schools. Lydia and Nevil disclosed how the frequent moves were challenging. Nevil remembered “moving at least nine times.” Further, Lydia noted that moving to different counties within Georgia and transferring to four new schools was “difficult.” She explained, “I had taken some high school courses in eighth grade, and when I transferred to the new high school, I lost all my credits.” As a result of the frequent moves, Lydia fell behind in classes:

I probably went to four different schools from elementary through high school. I moved a lot between those years, but it was all within the same state....So, it was mostly my dad just taking care of us, and we had to move where it was better for him to work.

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

I felt fear every first day of school except for my junior and senior years of high school. Fear of not succeeding and fear that I wouldn’t be accepted. Fear of not making friends, fear of failure, all the fears I could think of I had.
Lydia and Nevil’s disruption of frequent moves negatively impacted them emotionally and socially while impeding their academic studies. They did not have the educational foundation and stability due to their family’s financial circumstances.

**Cultural Differences**
Understanding the norms and traditions of a new country could be challenging. The cultural differences in the educational environment were adjustments for Griselda and Nevil. The participants explored their cultural background, described their native country, and compared these experiences to transitioning to the U.S. educational system. The participants charted their academic journey and understood how it shaped their identities and developed their growth toward self-authorship. They described their cultural differences in the school environment. For example, the pace of transition from one culture to functioning successfully in another varied between Griselda and Nevil. Griselda recalled her cultural adjustment as being “hard.” She had difficulty acclimating to her high school, “I feel that C-Town High School did not give me the support I needed to learn English, and I was failing… it was a difficult two-year experience of not learning.” Griselda felt disconnected in her new environment, resulting in frustration and academic disruption.

Similarly, Nevil emphasized that he “did not know anything” when he arrived in the U.S. “My whole world was in Guatemala with my grandma.” Moving from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar environment was emotionally impactful for Nevil and led to emotions of uncertainty and confusion. He explained, “Teachers couldn’t recognize that I was different or accept me for who I was.”

It was a complex experience for Griselda and Nevil to start a new school. The participants’ struggles with cultural differences resulted from various circumstances, such as exposure to diverse groups, attending a predominately White school, frequent moves, and language barriers. Each participant’s past cultural experiences contributed to navigating and managing the cultural expectations of their new educational setting. Although their educational journey in the U.S. was challenging with integrating and adjusting to their new environment, these participants desired to continue their education.

**Inadequate Preparation**
Although most participants completed AP, Honor, and/or Dual Enrollment courses, they also described academic challenges during their primary, middle, and secondary education or their first year of college. The participants described their educational setbacks and feelings of academic failure. The constant moves contributed to the unstable
foundation of Lydia’s education. Her family’s high mobility rate resulted in Lydia losing high school credits. The relocation to the U.S. and not knowing how to speak English resulted in Nevil repeating the third grade and Griselda inadequately prepared for high school. Due to limited English skills, Scott struggled during his primary education and did poorly in his high school English classes. Consequently, his language barrier hindered his learning, and he emphasized, “I disliked reading.” The inadequate primary and secondary education preparation resulted in Scott enrolling in remedial courses in college.

Griselda explained that the age-grade difference and lack of English proficiency contributed to her dropping out of high school. Griselda did not feel adequately prepared academically and resorted to dropping out of high school due to the language barrier. As a result, she resorted to seeking work in the poultry plant to pay her proprietary school tuition to learn English. “I worked hard in the poultry plant and saved money to pay for my school and help my parents financially.”

Lydia noted that the constant moves were challenging academically. She remembered, “It was very difficult to lose my credits because I did not want to fall behind.” In addition, she shared how her new high school’s migrant program provided her with a tutor. “The other students in my new high school were ahead of me, so I needed extra help.” She often felt uncomfortable that her high school assigned a tutor. Lydia did not like having a tutor and getting taken out of class for tutoring. She elaborated, “Other students would think I was stupid because I needed extra help.”

Furthermore, failing the third grade made Nevil feel a sense of academic failure, and “I took it personally that I had to take summer classes.” He blamed himself and said, “I felt like it was my issue, not the school’s or my parents’ issue.” In retrospect, Nevil now realized needing help learning English, and the school administrators and teacher did not provide additional assistance.

Scott was the only participant who shared his challenges of being inadequately prepared for college and taking remedial classes during his first year. Even though Scott noted he realized it was beneficial to be in remedial classes to prepare him to get to a college level. However, he expressed that taking these remedial courses delayed his graduation, which was “challenging.” He continued to say:

All my classes in the fall, spring, and summer semesters were remedial classes, which was challenging for me. Every semester, three of the four classes I had registered for were
remedial, which put me back with my graduation. I saw the benefit of being in remedial classes, but I know why people thought these were a waste of time. Being in remedial classes doesn’t count towards your GPA or graduation—nothing like that.

It was essential for Scott to take remedial classes to get to the college level. At first, he felt conflicted that he was not at a college level, but then he had to resolve within himself that the remedial classes were to prepare him. Taking the remedial courses often dissuaded him, but Scott understood these courses were required to succeed. Scott expressed that knowing the significance of these courses was critical because he “would have probably withdrawn from school.” However, Scott kept progressing and taking the required remedial courses to reach college-level classes.

Managing College and Family Obligations

Another subtheme from the lack of exposure to college-educated individuals was how the participants managed college and family obligations. Managing college and family obligations created increased pressure on the participants. Ashley, Griselda, Lydia, Nevil, and Scott contribute to the families’ needs while attending college. Their parents did not understand the responsibilities of being undergraduate students. They each described their challenges of living on campus, studying, participating in on-campus activities, or using the campus gym.

The obligation of the eldest sibling was not easy for Ashley to manage college and home. She explained how her parents were happy she was attaining a college degree but found it challenging with her mother. She noted how her father was supportive, but her mother had difficulties with her attending college. She mentioned:

My dad was happy I wanted to attend college, even though it was tough on my father and my mother that I left home to attend college. I helped my mother a lot at home with my younger siblings, so it was harder for her when I decided to leave off for college.

Ashley went home as often as possible to help her mother. Although Ashley was in her last semester of college and would receive her degree, she still found it “hard” to manage her family obligations. Likewise, Griselda noted how she was the oldest daughter and responsible for helping the family:

When we came to this country, everything was different than what we knew in El Salvador. We came here, and my parents did not know English, and they did not know about the education system. They depend on me because I am the oldest and speak English.
For instance, Lydia conveyed that her parents did not allow her to live on campus, which caused her difficulties when she was on campus studying or working out in the gym. Lydia’s parents gave her a curfew, and she had to be home to help her mother and sister:

When I started college, I wanted to live on campus, but my parents did not let me. I also wanted to exercise at school because they have a gym. I want to be healthy. I told my parents I was going to the gym, and they wanted me to be home at six o’clock. I would leave the house and go to the gym, stay at school, study for a few hours, and attend my classes. If I went to the gym, I would get in trouble. My parents did not want me to go to the gym or shower at the gym. They did not want me to study at school either because they needed me at home to help them.

Lydia voiced how her parents would tell her there was “a desk at home to study and why don’t you use it.” She explained how her parents constantly fought with her about not being home, “They did not understand that I wanted to study at school instead of being at home helping them and helping my sister with homework.” The oldest sibling’s obligations of helping the family and managing college were very stressful for Lydia, “Basically, I was my little sister’s mom. I attend her teacher meetings, help her with homework, and take her to her doctor and dentist appointments.” She reflected, “Even though I was already successful in high school, had an outstanding GPA, and had all these achievements, I struggled in my first year of college.” Nevil divulged his struggles during his second semester in the CAMP program due to his family’s financial upheavals. He elaborated, “Ultimately, things just kept getting financially worse after my parents divorced.” With the assistance of CAMP, Nevil received a paying internship. He also worked after classes to help his family. In addition, Nevil conveyed how fortunate he was that CAMP provided scholarships to cover tuition for his first year of college and stipends. He expressed, “The financial support was great for me.”

Further, Scott had to enroll at UNG part-time to support and manage their family and work obligations. He explained:

It never crossed my mind about leaving school. It crossed my mind early on to go to school part-time, which is what I ended up doing regardless. I had to become a part-time student because of my job. Work was getting to me, and I had to support my family. The participants’ challenges were balancing college and family responsibilities while contributing to their families’ needs or
understanding the higher education process. Managing these internal and external obligations was impactful for the participants as first-generation college students. Each participant understood the sacrifice and commitment of pursuing college despite these challenges.

Attributes of Being a CAMP Student
All participants described their CAMP experience as positive. Participants explored how CAMP provided multiple perspectives in pursuing their undergraduate degree, assisted with challenges, and acknowledged their cultural reality and personal choices. The CAMP program encouraged the participants to take ownership of themselves and their learning. The participants illustrated how CAMP assisted them in completing their first year of college and helped them acclimate to higher education. Participants disclosed how CAMP offered them a family environment and community of fitting in. They also delineated how CAMP provided them with academic and financial support and effective strategies for time management and living away from home.

CAMP enabled them to persevere academically by encouraging participation in student organizations, developing leadership skills, serving as role models, and valuing educational support. Additionally, CAMP was instrumental in assisting migrant students during the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, participants emphasized their pride in their educational endeavors and academic accomplishments. They also expressed how they wanted to make their parents proud of them. They continued to describe how they wanted to give back to the migrant community and raise awareness of migrant culture.

Family Environment and Community of Fitting In
Ashley, Gilbert, Jeff, and Lydia chose the CAMP program because they wanted a community, fitting in, family, a sense of belonging, and instant friendships. Ashley desired to gain an awareness of herself and her Mexican culture, “I desperately wanted to belong to a community where I fit in.” She elaborated:

CAMP taught me the value of being a migrant student, and I am proud of being a migrant. CAMP made me feel accepted and that I was in the right place. It gave me a community with similar experiences and made me feel like I had a community. I now had people who would accept me. It was a nice experience, and I loved life and looked forward to my education at UNG. CAMP is a home, a place you could call home.
CAMP connected Gilbert to other students with similar backgrounds, “CAMP gave me a community and what I didn’t have in all my years of schooling.” He expressed his content as a CAMP student and how he made friends, “I made many friends, befriended everyone in the program, and developed close ties with everyone in my cohort.” He continued to say:

I was the only Hispanic student in the honors classes with the same White students all 12 years of school. But then I got accepted into the CAMP program and came to UNG and met a bunch of people that are like me, exactly like me, migrants. So, I finally made friends and got to know other students like me. I met people who have similar backgrounds to me and similar cultures. So that was fun.

Additionally, Jeff instantly made friends with other migrant students. Jeff said with CAMP, “You start your first year of college with other migrant students enrolled in the program.” He explained:

Whenever you go to college, you have to go out and make connections and go out and make friends. CAMP was beneficial in me making friends in college. We were a cohort of about 30 students. So I already had 30 friends when I started college.

Lastly, Lydia revealed how she was finally “part of something.” She explained that “I met many people that look just like me that were in my same shoes, that they all just wanted to go to college and be successful.” She elaborated on her excitement:

I was really excited. Everyone at the CAMP orientation spoke a lot of Spanish and English. They had food and a presentation of who they were and what they did in the program. They taught us who they were as people. I recognized that they all had the same background, making me feel like I was part of something for once.

The process of self-evolution and seeking a new environment of belonging was essential for the participants. The participants build a sense of connection with others and acceptance of their identity.

**Academic Support**

Most participants expressed the benefits of CAMP academic support through mentorship, coach support, counseling, tutoring, assistance with course selections, mandatory study hours, writing labs, and assignments such as meeting with their professors or setting up mock interviews with the Career Center and internship opportunities. Each participant described a positive experience with the academic support they received. The
support they received developed their social and emotional skills. Participants disclosed how they learned to handle obstacles or challenges, increasing their academic success.

Griselda described how CAMP provided her with academic assistance, “The CAMP instructors assist me with my essays and tutor me with my math.” Ashley, Gilbert, Griselda, and Lydia shared their positive experience with CAMP’s requirement to connect with their professors. Ashley communicated how CAMP taught her to approach professors with her concerns when her classes were challenging, “It was a great experience establishing a relationship with the faculty.”

Gilbert highlighted how the CAMP staff required him to meet with his professors was helpful:

CAMP required the students to meet with their professors. At the beginning of each semester, I would meet with my professors and introduce myself. I would tell them that I am a CAMP student in this program. After I took my midterms, I asked the professors if they could provide me with a midterm report required by the CAMP program stating if I did good or not. The encouragement to interact with the professor helped Gilbert maintain a good rapport with his professors. Gilbert noted how “this assignment honestly did help, and it helped me a lot with being able to approach professors because I had a hard time doing that.”

Furthermore, CAMP scheduled mandatory CAMP cohort meetings to engage CAMP students. Lydia noted how “the cohort meetings are helpful, and I get a lot of information on stuff that is available at the university.”

Lydia often shared her personal and academic challenges with the CAMP staff. The CAMP coach gave Lydia an outline for starting a conversation with her parents. Also, the CAMP coach provided Lydia with effective communication strategies with her parents, “The CAMP coach was always there to give me an outline of how I could talk to my parents and always giving me new ways to approach them.”

Nevil often sought the guidance of the CAMP coach to assist him with his emotions and family concerns:

The counseling and coaching services CAMP provided helped me understand how to handle my emotions and family situations. CAMP helped me not directly but indirectly by telling me, hey, you can do it… not only can you do it, but this is also how you can do it. They impacted my life personally and academically.

The participants’ stories were enlightening on CAMP’s academic support and
requirements. However, as one of the original cohorts of the CAMP program, Scott stated that he did not know if he could handle all the program’s new requirements, “CAMP has grown since I started and has gotten stricter.” He continued, “The demands of mandatory study hours, meeting with peer mentors, and the option of internship opportunities for CAMP students also require many hours.” He expressed mixed emotions about these requirements and commented that “students may get overwhelmed or overworked.” He expounded how he often wonders “how a CAMP student could manage the demanding study hours and work a part-time job.” Scott was “fortunate not to have to fulfill all the CAMP requirements while a student.”

On the contrary, Lydia felt that the CAMP staff provided the necessary support for migrant students and were always there to help. She mentioned:

“I was born in a household with parents working in agriculture who didn’t attend college. My parents couldn’t be my educational mentors, so CAMP gave me mentorship. Also, any migrant student willing to work hard and get a college degree should be part of the CAMP program.

Finally, Gilbert and Nevil expressed that the internship opportunities offered by CAMP were helpful, allowing them to get paid while gaining valuable experience.

Discussion

Currently, there is limited information about MSFW students’ experiences enrolled in college and CAMP (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Due to the limited research in this area, there is a need to continue and explore the experiences and effects of migrant students who participate in CAMP programs at PWIs. As such, this study explored how CAMP students formed their identity development and self-authorship in a PWI academic environment. We utilized Baxter Magolda’s theory of self-authorship to examine the CAMP students’ journey toward self-authorship development and how they constructed their personal growth and knowledge during the program (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

CAMP as a Resource

Consistent with the literature, (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O’Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009; 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007), study participants expressed being a part of the CAMP program helped alleviate challenges faced during the first year of college. Lydia and Nevil reflected on the disruption caused by frequent moves and how that impacted their academic readiness. Griselda and Scott had similar experiences;
Griselda dropped out of high school at one point due to her lack of language proficiency, and Scott had to take remedial classes before enrolling in college-level coursework. Students discussed how CAMP assisted their academic preparation through mentorship, tutoring, and required meetings with professors.

Students also found community in their CAMP program. Ashley, Gilbert, Jeff, and Lydia all noted that part of the reason they joined CAMP was because of the community aspect it provided. Ashley’s comment, “I desperately wanted to belong to a community where I fit in,” and Scott’s comment, “I made many friends, befriended everyone in the program, and developed close ties with everyone in my cohort,” are both consistent with the findings of Escamilla & Trevino, (2014) and O’Connor et al., (2020).

Further, CAMP was helpful for students as they balanced college with family obligations. Ashley, Griselda, Lydia, Nevil, and Scott each discussed the challenges of contributing to the family, financially and otherwise, while attending college. This finding aligns with Araujo’s (2011) research on CAMP through a community cultural wealth lens. As with the students in Araujo’s study, our participants appreciated CAMP’s financial support and counseling and coaching services. Nevil’s reflection, “The counseling and coaching services CAMP provided helped me understand how to handle my emotions and family situations...They impacted my life personally and academically,” indicates CAMP was helpful as he navigated the challenge of balancing home life and college.

### Migrant Students’ Progression Towards Self-Authorship

All participants engaged in a CAMP program at a PWI. Each participant described their CAMP experience as positive. Exploring their experiences with CAMP allowed them to understand how CAMP was instrumental in their identity development and self-authorship. According to Baxter Magolda (2001), understanding previous experiences can influence how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and make meaning of new experiences. Each participant made meaning of their self-evolution from external influences to establish their internal influences. Participants developed an understanding of their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Participants’ reflections and making sense of their experiences influenced how they framed their understanding of themselves to ensure their academic success. Constructing one’s experience or meaning-making is a vital element of self-authorship.

Furthermore, the present study was consistent with Baxter Magolda’s (2001)
study that high-risk college students who experienced pre-college challenges could develop self-authorship during college. Participants experienced challenging pre-college experiences, including disruption of frequent moves, cultural differences, and feelings of inadequate preparation. Each participant focused on the context of their past and present emotions and thoughts to make meaning of their experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). As participants made meaning of their experiences, the research found that self-authorship developed during different times of their undergraduate journey. Not all participants moved from an external to an internal sense of self-definition during their first year of CAMP (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Participants developed and made meaning of their transition from external influences to establish their internal influences at different times of their postsecondary careers. Each participant took steps toward self-authorship by taking accountability for their external and internal life demands, managing matters effectively, and making informed decisions (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Implications for Practice and Higher Education Professionals
The findings of this study suggested that CAMP empowered migrant students’ identity development and self-authorship in pursuit of their undergraduate degrees. Further, CAMP enhanced migrant students’ personal growth as they valued and understood their beliefs and self-interests. Moreover, CAMP sets the foundation for migrant students’ academic achievements, community engagement, educational and career endeavors, and the development of future leaders and educators.

The study findings further indicated that CAMP had a positive impact on the participants. After a review of the results and findings, there were areas to improve the continued growth and advancement of the CAMP program and students. The following are the implications for practice: (1) understand that CAMP is a community for its members and continue efforts to build that community through programming and outreach, (2) offer financial resources and academic services to participants that have completed the CAMP program to ensure retention and persistence of graduation, (3) provide additional academic services for those taking remedial coursework or who are struggling academically, (4) host family orientation sessions and programming throughout the year to help families understand the CAMP program, and (5) establish and grow CAMP programs on campuses with large populations of MSFW students.

As previously noted, with the growing migrant population in Georgia (Atlanta Regional Commission [ARC], 2016), there is a need for Institutions of Higher Education
(IHEs) to address the issues with educational discrepancies and support comprehensive educational programs like CAMP to assist migrant students. The findings of this study carry several implications for institutions of higher education senior executive leaders. As IHEs continue to focus on undergraduate student enrollment, retention, academic performance, and graduation rates, the present study findings offer solutions with the CAMP program to relieve academically and financially some of the barriers migrant students experience in postsecondary education.

The CAMP program greatly impacts migrant students’ academic success and achievements. The support of CAMP programs at IHEs is pivotal and vital to promoting migrant students’ postsecondary degree goals. IHEs should increase their efforts to recruit and support migrant students on their college campuses. In addition, college campuses should create a cultural environment that intentionally promotes awareness of migrant culture, its diversity, and inclusion. Empowering the campus community to be innovative and creative to support all students, including race, ethnicity, and gender, is equally essential. The principles and values to serve the diverse population are the foundation for improving all students’ and colleagues’ educational quality and sustaining all college readiness projects. Training the campus community to obtain knowledge and skills and communicating with them about the migrant population, diversity, and integration of the CAMP are essential steps in the implementation process and throughout the project’s life.

In addition, academia needs to attract diversity among scholars from many regions of the country and globally. There is an urgency to address the growing migrant population and ensure that the IHE’s demographics reflect this change. Attracting diverse administrators and faculty in various disciplines is crucial to meet the rapidly growing migrant student enrollment. The campus community’s understanding of the migrant student demographics will fill a gap in cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusion. Lastly, increasing migrant awareness is critical for all college students to develop an understanding of other cultures and prepare them to co-exist in a diverse and multinational society. It will also prepare college students as they journey into an integrated global workforce.

Recommendations for Future Research
As previously indicated, there is limited information about migrant students’ college experiences and CAMP enrollment (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Furthermore, a paucity of literature suggests the connections between CAMP students’ experiences in a PWI, identity development, and self-
authorship. As noted previously, the few studies conducted found that migrant students viewed CAMP as an essential factor in their pursuit of a degree and that CAMP helped alleviate some of the struggles migrant students experience in pursuing their undergraduate degree (Araujo, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; O’Connor et al., 2020; Willison & Jang, 2009; 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the CAMP program and migrant students at UNG, and the present study fills this gap. While the current qualitative study has rich data, it only captured the experiences of seven participants in a CAMP program from one PWI in northern Georgia. Further research across different institutions with a CAMP program is essential to compare data between CAMP and IHEs.

Research on CAMP alums to explore their academic and career success is essential to the sustainability and continued funding of the CAMP program. The study results could also influence federal and state governing agencies, migrant organizations, institutions of higher education, and high school educators in guiding and promoting postsecondary education to migrant students with valuable concepts to support educational programs necessary to provide services for migrant students.

**Conclusion**

The findings suggested that CAMP support services encouraged participants to pursue their postsecondary education goals, overcome personal challenges, find community, and ultimately, achieve academic success. Participants developed their identity and established self-authorship as migrant students due to the influences and impacts of CAMP. Participants gained acceptance of their identity and felt great pride as migrant students attending a PWI.

Furthermore, all participants expressed pride in their parents’ sacrifices and struggle to provide for their families and make the journey to live in the U.S. The seven participants completed the one-year CAMP program and have continued with their academic goals. Further, with the continued support of CAMP, two of the seven participants graduated with their bachelor’s degrees, and two continued to pursue a master’s degree. These participants stayed involved with CAMP after their first year of the program, and each participant credited the CAMP program for their academic achievements throughout their undergraduate journey. It is clear that “CAMP is a home” for a group of students who may not have found community elsewhere on campus.
REFERENCES


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