Family Decisions and Latino Emancipated Migrant Youth: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Background

- Latinos account for 80% of all farmworkers in the U.S. (Hernandez, Gabbard, & Carroll, 2015).

- About 10% of the farmworker population in the U.S. are youth – ages 14 to 21 (Hernandez et al., 2016).

- Primarily male (89%), lack work authorization (70%), and have limited/no health insurance (77%) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005).

- EMY come to the U.S. without their parents and work in agriculture (Peoples et al., 2010).

- EMY have limited job training, poor supervision, often lack safety knowledge (McLaurin & Liebman, 2012).

- Latino EMY: youth in adult roles
The Present Study

This paper is guided by a qualitative phenomenological approach designed to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of EMY (Creswell, 2013).

(1) The primary aim was to describe the factors contributing to EMY’s decision to migrate to the U.S. and perform farm work.

RQ: “What are the contributing factors that lead Latino male EMY to the decision to migrate to the United States and enter the US agricultural labor force?”
Method

Participants

- Purposeful sample of EMY residing in Georgia and Florida (N = 20)
- Latino EMY (50% from Mexico, 50% H2A temporary visa holders; 50% from Guatemala, 50% undocumented)
- Latino EMY ages 15 to 20
- Mage = 17.75; 100% males.

Data Collection

- Recruitment by the PI and a promotora de salud (i.e., health promoter) working through supports enabled by community entrée activities.
- NIH Certificate of Confidentiality
- Interviews were in person at three different locations: a private office space, EMYs’ home kitchen, and stores’ parking lots.
- All interviews were in Spanish and lasted, about 45 to 60 minutes.
- Participants received a $10 incentive
Analysis

1. All interviews were transcribed verbatim in Spanish by the PI.
2. The Spanish transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis based on rigorous coding procedures (Creswell, 2013) and supported by the use of NVivo 11 Pro.
3. **Validity**: An external member was invited to examine the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
4. Open coding [PI and external auditor] read each narrative and recorded broad categories that were evident across participant experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
5. **Data saturation**: was reached upon verification that all themes were identified and that no new categories were present (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Guatemala [Ages 15 to 17]</th>
<th>Mexico [Ages 18 to 20]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It was the best thing I could do”</td>
<td>P#09 “…As I told you, we were running out of money, out of food, nothing, we had nothing, and that is why I came over here and now at least we have something, at least something”</td>
<td>P#21 “…My dad had also come before but he cannot longer work because of his health and now it is my turn, I wanted to continue studying but not anymore, my dad told me that he was not going to be able to help me so I decided to help them, that was the reason why I came to work here and I am supporting them.”</td>
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<td>“It was my decision”</td>
<td>P#03 “… It made me think about something, that I wanted to succeed in life. I made my own decision, with my own thoughts …Somebody helped me of course. But I wanted to come here and then later I asked for help and that’s how I was able to do it [come to the U.S]. I got help with money in order to come over here.”</td>
<td>P#22 “Well, ever since I was 14, well, I had the idea about coming here, whether it was gonna be legally or illegally, I was gonna come here. I always had the idea of achieving my own goals, and one of them was building my own house. I mean, a house of my own, and not depend so much on my parents because they already have their own home, and I want my own house, my own house.”</td>
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<td>“Farm work just made sense”</td>
<td>P#01 “Because, I don’t know, it’s a less complicated work perhaps, we can sow plants, and I know various types of work, but here in the United States, you need English. So it is a little more complicated for me, I know a few words, but that is not enough to work in a restaurant or something like that.”</td>
<td>P#16 “My half-brothers were already working in agriculture in Mexico and they were the ones who started me on this you could say. Because, ah, well, in Mexico, to find a job a young age, you won’t be able to find it anywhere else but in farm work, and that it’s why I think, I started working in farm work.”</td>
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<td>“This is just temporary”</td>
<td>P#04: “Well they say [my parents] that I have to keep pushing forward, and not suffer so much over there [in U.S.], make a little bit of money here and then come back to there [Guatemala] and you did some work and what you worked for is what’s gonna [financially] sustain you. Because in the U.S. I am only going to live for a few years, then I will come back to my country.”</td>
<td>P#16: “I am not planning to come here [the U.S.] my entire life, right? That’s not what this is about. It’s about moving forward, that your family has everything and try to save [money] to start something on your own, right? I’ve always said that the idea is that I’m not always going to be an employee, one day I am going to be the boss.”</td>
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Discussion

• The decision to migrate to the U.S. is primarily financially motivated.

• Underneath the pursuit of financial gains, migration, at its core, is an expression of care (Heidbrink, 2018).

• Farm work reflected a “quick” way to make money while still being young.

• Migration as a way to prepare for the future (e.g., save money, buy land, build a house).

• The majority of Latino farmworker EMY planned to return back to their home countries eventually.

• EMY may be carrying the financial burden/responsibility to provide for themselves and their families from a young age.
Limitations

- The inability to discern patterns in the data potentially attributed to nationality (Guatemalan EMY vs. Mexican EMY).
- Documentation status differences (H2A visa vs. undocumented status).
- Age differences in youth development (being official an adult 18+ vs. being a minor; cognitive processes).
- Location in the U.S. Southeast, other regions were not explored.

Future Research

- Future research on Latino EMY should address the intergenerational component of migration and farmwork in the U.S.
- Focus on EMYs from a specific age group (i.e., older/younger than 18).
- Documentation status in the U.S. (i.e., H2A visa vs. undocumented).
- Future research ought to include female Latina EMY.
- Include longitudinal qualitative studies.
- Include quantitative examinations, particularly longitudinal studies.
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References


Thank You!

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