A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE USE OF ONLINE EDUCATION TO OVERCOME THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Kelsey LeDuc-Williams, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "A Qualitative Study Exploring the Use of Online Education to Overcome the Educational Challenges Faced by Out of School Youth," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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ABSTRACT

Out of School Youth encompass a unique group of individuals who are not benefiting from the free and appropriate public education they are eligible to receive. The challenges faced by this group are immense; however, as evident in this study, they can be overcome. This study found that with flexible educational platforms, training on the U.S. education system, and additional familial supports, these students can succeed and obtain a U.S. high school diploma. In addition, the themes that emerged from this study were used to put together a structural outline for educators looking to support this group of students within their facilities.

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Introduction

"Public schools should provide equitable access and ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability."

(National School Boards Association, 2012, p.25)

Entry Vignette

In 1960, with the airing of *Harvest of Shame* (Columbia Broadcasting System [CBS]), a documentary that depicted the backbreaking work, the constant mobility, and the uncertainty of migrant life, the United States was faced with the moral dilemma of the migrant worker. The documentary brought to life the unthinkable conditions and livelihoods experienced by the very individuals who put food on every American table. In 1965, five years after *Harvest of Shame*, Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The ESEA was the first law to provide equal education for all students. With the adoption of Title 1 part C, the law extended to migrant students and brought to light the specific challenges met by this population (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I, Part C, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 1965). Today the Office of Migrant Education (OME) has worked hard to educate and support public schools serving the migrant students of the United States. The needs of this population are immense and diverse, especially in the migrant

population referred to as Out of School Youth (OSY). This research study introduces the reader to seven OSY, all with various challenges and circumstances, yet all with the desire to complete a high school education. These participants shared their stories with the hope of affecting change within the current education system because they believe they can have a positive influence. In the words of the great Cesar Chavez*, "si se puede"* (Marin, n.d.).

Introduction

In the United States, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and court cases such as Brown v. Board of Education, Lau v. Nichols, and Plyler v. Doe have established an ethical responsibility to educate all students equally, regardless of their ability, race, gender, and/or legal status. Graduation rates are frequently used as an end measure to determine a school's success in accomplishing this.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) completed a report disaggregating graduation rates from 1972-2009 based on various indicators, among them, race. According to this report, Hispanic students had the highest dropout rates of any ethnic group (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & Kewal-Ramani, 2011). Hispanic students are the fastest growing population in the United States schools, making it imperative to decrease their dropout rates (Rodriguez, Vaughn, & Hickey, 2010). Hispanic students have an estimated graduation rate of 50% and make up an estimated 86% of all migrant students. One study concluded that Hispanics make up to 56% of all U.S. immigrants while accounting for 96% of all immigrant dropouts (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). High mobility makes it difficult to track the graduation and dropout rates of the migrant population. The statistics are estimates; however the alarming rates they represent are significant. The development of alternative educational options to meet the needs of these students is overdue.

The rate at which Hispanic, migrant youth are leaving school is significant but even more significant is the need to better understand these students and their challenges. In order to do this, one must understand the very definition of migrant. A migrant worker is one who moves frequently, on average three times a year, in order to find work. Agricultural work is the most common work for the migrant worker, and the laws governing this type of work differ from traditional labor laws. It is not uncommon to see entire families working together in the fields because of the flexibility provided within the agricultural labor laws. The average salary of a migrant worker ranges from $12,500 - $14,999 annually. The average educational attainment of a migrant worker is 8th grade ("NCFH Fact Sheet," 2012). Agricultural manual labor is the work most typically done by migrant workers. A migrant student can qualify as migrant because his or her parents are migrant workers or because he or she is a migrant worker.

Migrant students between the ages of 16-21 who either drop out of public schools in order to obtain qualifying work or who have never entered the public school system because their primary focus is to obtain work are referred to as Out of School Youth (OSY) (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010). These individuals pose one of the largest challenges for public schools because the priority of OSY is to work, usually to support or help support their families. They have a desire to attend school; however, obligation and duty win out over education.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, every school in the United States faces the challenge of meeting the educational needs of all of their students. Within the last decade, online or virtual education has lifted the limitations previously experienced by traditional schools. This study highlights both the positive and negative sides of online education and how it can best be utilized to serve the vulnerable OSY population. The second part of this study strives to give voice to the Out of School Youth and the unique educational needs they have. These students are

an underserved and overlooked population. Without significant changes to what is most commonly viewed as traditional education, these students will continue to fail.

The conclusions can assist online and traditional schools in determining the structure of their programs and the supports needed by OSY. This study extends the value of current literature by proposing changes or supports necessary for OSY to be successful in credit accrual.

For the purposes of this study, Out of School Youth refers to migrant students between the ages of 16 and 21 who have never graduated from a U.S. high school or achieved an approved equivalent.

Statement of the Problem

In 2009, the dropout rate in America's public high schools was 8.1%, with Hispanics representing the largest percentage within that group (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). In 2005, Hispanics accounted for 41% of all dropouts while comprising 17% of the population (Data Source, 2005). Only 10% of migrant farm workers finish high school, with a dropout rate of 90% (Martinez, Scott, Cranston-Gingras, & Platt, 1994). These farm workers throughout the rural United States are worn, tired and exposed. They prepare the soil, tend the fields, and harvest the crops. Legal hours, conditions, and ages of these workers vary from state to state, but the fastest growing migrant population is made up of the individuals who are referred to as Out of School Youth (Strategies-Opportunities-Services for Out of School Youth, 2012). These individuals have not yet received a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED) (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010). While their peers are learning about Shakespeare and solving for "x", these young people are performing manual labor. Sometimes they are working by choice, but often they are working to provide basic necessities for

themselves and their families. This population is frequently overlooked, underserved, and at times pushed out of public schools (Vocke, 2007).

Research over the past 55 years has shown an increase in the awareness of and services provided to the migrant population in general, and more specifically, to OSY (Romanowski, 2003; Shaw, 1958; Salerno, 1991; Topeka, KS: Office of Migrant Education, 2010; Valdez, 2008; Vocke, 2007). However, educational systems have yet to find wide-scale solutions, and the graduation rates of this population continue to be the lowest of any group (Chapman et al., 2011; Shaw, 1958). This is the only student population that has experienced no improvement in graduation rates over the past four decades (Salerno, 1991). Researchers interviewed Hispanic students who dropped out of an urban high school in Texas where the Hispanic dropout rate was 19.2%. These students were asked why they were dropping out, and compiled results indicated that students perceived an inability to communicate with their school leaders and teachers, reporting that they could not relate to them in a respectable or professional manner mostly due to the language barrier (Rodriguez, et al, 2010). The need to connect with school staff in a student's native language is very important. Most schools rely on their English language teachers to be mentors for the English learners (ELs) in their schools. This becomes problematic because of the low number of teachers who have the actual skills to serve EL students. A report published by Idaho's Association of Bilingual Educators showed 39% of staff that serve ELs in Idaho are doing so without the qualifications of a certified English language teacher (Batt, 2008). This continues to be a problem that needs to be addressed. The educational success of Hispanic youth as well as the resources and support they need must be made a priority ("Challenges and Opportunities," n.d.).

Background

Individuals from various countries have frequently migrated north in hope of finding work. These countries include: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and other Central and South American countries. During 1942-1964 the United States entered into several agreements with Mexico, which allowed 4.6 million braceros, or day laborers, to work on short-term contracts in the United States. Groups of workers, sometimes consisting of families, friends, or workers with similar expertise, would travel together in search of work. The ages of these individuals varied along with the groups in which they traveled, but their purpose was the same. They worked in low paying, primarily agricultural jobs. Although this was not the first time migrant labor was used, it was the first time it was put into law (Center for History and New Media, 2013). After 1964, the need for day laborers continued; however, the agreements between the United States and Mexico were no longer in place. Workers continued to come to the United States, some on work permits, some without any legal documentation. Regardless of their status, this population continued to bring with it school-age students who were candidates for public education in the United States. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court case Plyler v. Doe established elementary and secondary education as a constitutional right regardless of legal status (Borkowski, 2009). Students of undocumented workers and school-age workers were now legally eligible to receive public education. This law had a positive effect on school-age students who were not eligible to work. For the first time, these students were allowed in public U.S. schools without legal documentation. Previous fears of being caught or exposed at the school level were demolished. Although this law had a positive effect for this population, graduation rates did not increase. Eligible students continued to drop out or never enter school.

It is very difficult to determine the graduation rate for migrant students or even more specifically, Out of School Youth. Research has been conducted to measure the graduation rates of subpopulations of various ethnic groups (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, two or more races, and Hispanic of any race), socioeconomic status (as measured by free or reduced lunch status), and English Learners (EL). Migrant students very frequently fall into these categories, but are not represented independently. The graduation rate of migrant students is speculated to be around 10% (Martinez, et al, 1994).

Along with difficulties in determining graduation rates for migrant students, finding research studies to determine how to support their needs is just as challenging. Very few studies have been conducted to determine which methods are successful in serving these students (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Moore, & Hornig-Fox, 2010). The Solutions for Out of School Youth (SOSY) Consortium has partnered with 21 states to begin collecting data on the actual number of OSY within each participating state (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010). Its goal is to identify these students, develop programs that best meet their needs, and share the results of their research with all states servicing OSY. The researcher utilized the consortium's findings to identify the major factors causing OSY to drop out or never enter U.S. public schools. This information was used to structure survey questions for OSY.

Research Questions

Three central research questions were explored in this research study. They were:

1. What were the educational experiences of the Out of School Youth participants?
2. How did credit accrual for the OSY who attended the online school differ from that in a traditional setting?

3. What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY in both the traditional and virtual settings?

Description of Terms

For the purpose of this research project, the following definitions outline some frequently used phrases found throughout this paper.

Achievement gap. The difference in academic performance between ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Core academic classes. Core academic classes include English, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires core classes to be taught by highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Dropout rate. Proportion of students that have not completed high school and are not enrolled at one point in time, regardless of when they dropped out. Rates tend to be much higher than event dropout rates because they show the cumulative effect of the annual event rates over several years ("Glossary of education," 2013).

Emancipated youth. Children under the age of majority (in accordance with state law) who are no longer under the control of a parent or guardian and who are solely responsible for their own welfare. In order to be eligible for the Migrant Education Program (MEP), these youth may not be older than 21 years of age (Migrant Education Program [MEP], 2010, p. 11).

English learner. An individual who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; or who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or who is an American Indian or Alaska Native and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or

her level of English language proficiency; and who, by reason thereof, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Free or reduced lunch status. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level qualify for free lunch. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents (National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet, 2012).

Graduation rate. Ratio of the number of students who complete a particular course of study, earning a certificate, diploma, or degree, to the number of students initially enrolled in it ("Glossary of Education," 2013).

Here to Work. Students, primarily from Mexico or Central America, who come the U.S. to work (Strategies – Opportunities – Services for Out of School Youth, 2012).

Highly qualified teacher. To be highly qualified, teachers must have: (1) a bachelor's degree, (2) full state certification or licensure, and (3) prove that they know each subject they teach. States must report the percentage of all classes that have highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Migratory child. A child:

(1) who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; or

(2) who, in the preceding 36 months, has accompanied or joined a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and

(i) has moved from one school district to another; or

(ii) in a state comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or

(iii) as the child of a migratory fisher, resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence (Migrant Education program, 2010).

Out of School Immigrant Youth. School-age students between the ages of 5 and 21 who have immigrated to the United States and are not enrolled in a U.S. Public School (Hill & Hayes, 2007).

Out of School Youth. Students typically between the ages of 16 and 21 who are not enrolled in a U.S. School and have not already graduated or received a GED (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010).

Title III. The Title III program is designed to improve the education of limited English proficient (LEP) children and youth by helping them learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. The program provides enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youths. Funds are distributed to states based on a formula that takes into account the number of immigrant and LEP students in each state (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Recovery youth. Students who were enrolled in a U.S. School, but have dropped out, typically in order to secure work (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010).

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study, which should be noted. In order for students to participate, a signed consent was required. If an Out of School Youth was unaccompanied, which was not uncommon, the researcher was very limited in obtaining signed consent from a parent, thus limiting the participants for this study. The other limitation of this

study lies within the very nature of the population. There were OSY participants who completed online courses but then moved, and the researcher was unable to track down their whereabouts.

Significance of the Study

Results of this study document how online education can be used to meet the needs of Out of School Youth. It highlights the supports needed in order for students to be successful in both the virtual and traditional settings. This research summarizes the individual responses of each participant to give the reader a sense of background. It highlights reoccurring themes that emerged from the interviews. Interview questions were designed to answer the three research questions. By considering responses to these questions, schools should be able to develop programs within their own facilities to support the educational needs of this unique population. This study also demonstrates the feasibility of developing a program that provides laptops and curriculum where migrant students can enroll, take online classes, and earn credits towards a high school diploma while maintaining the migrant lifestyle necessary to support themselves and/or their families.

Overview of Research Methods

For this study, an ethnographic qualitative approach was used to narrate the educational experiences of Out of School Youth in both traditional and virtual settings while looking at the supports that are needed to impact this unique population of students. The researcher interviewed and then evaluated the interviews of the OSY who participated in online courses to determine what worked, what was unsuccessful in promoting improved learning, and what additional supports would be beneficial. The survey was designed to analyze each student's entire educational experience. Participants were asked to provide feedback regarding which supports

they felt were necessary, which would have been beneficial, and what they felt would have been needed to be successful in both an online and traditional setting.

Organization of the Dissertation

This qualitative research study includes six chapters. Chapter I introduces the topic of this study and presents the foundational information needed to understand the purpose. It highlights the research questions and includes information on background definitions and limitations. Chapter II is the literature review, which takes the reader through the current literature on the topic of Out of School Youth. The topic of this dissertation is fairly new; therefore, the amount of literature available is limited. Additional literature that focuses on migrant education, English learners, and using online education to support at-risk populations is also included to support this study. This chapter concludes by offering the reader a consolidated list of challenges faced by OSY that has been highlighted in the literature.

Chapter III presents the design and methods used to carry out this ethnographic, qualitative research study. It includes qualifying participants, plus data collection and analytic methods. This chapter also includes a description of the courses in the participants' online school and specific information relating to the data collection in regard to site, location, and conditions. The information included in Chapter III is provided so further research can be conducted and this research study replicated.

Chapter IV takes the reader into the lives and experiences of each participant. General and individual demographics are included. This section gives voice to participants' individual situations, their challenges, and uniqueness. Participants spoke candidly on their educational experiences and what they feel could have improved their chances. It is the goal of the researcher to give a voice to each participant by interweaving their individual struggles and suggestions into

each of their narratives. The suggestions offered by each participant are both valuable and enriching for all who choose to listen.

Chapter V outlines the findings obtained through 14 interviews (two for each participant), which were transcribed and coded. The various coded transcripts were then used to determine the emerging themes. Visual representation for the identified themes are given to allow the reader additional guidance. The significance of these themes and how they were developed is also discussed.

Chapter VI summarizes the research questions, displays the identified themes, presents recommendations for future research, and offers the reader a final conclusion. In Chapter VI are the researcher's recommendations on how to set up an educational program that will best support the needs of OSY. These recommendations include the suggestions of each participant and incorporates the identified themes that emerged from the research. This chapter concludes by encouraging the reader to continue research on this topic and includes further research topic suggestions and recommendations.

Chapter II

The Literature Review

Introduction

Migrant workers are classified as such because they are highly mobile (Romanowski, 2003). They work in agricultural jobs. The work requires frequent moves in order to follow the crops. The average number of moves per year for a migrant worker is three (Vocke, 2007). Migrant students are defined as those whose parents/guardians are participating in migratory agricultural work or migratory fishing and have made a qualifying move within the last 36 months (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I, Part C, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 1965). A more specific group within this population are school-age students (16 to 21 years old) who are (1) classified as Here to Work, usually from Mexico or Central America or (2) referred to as Recovery Youth, students who have previously been enrolled in a United States public school system but have dropped out (Migrant Education Program, 2010). Both categories, Here to Work and Recovery Youth, make up the growing Out of School Youth population (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010).

The U.S. Government addressed the challenges and hardships facing migrant workers first during the Great Depression. A variety of programs to assist these workers, such as migrant labor camps, were implemented (Shaw, 1958). Although living conditions did improve, an overall lack of labor regulations still existed for these workers. During World War II, the need for agricultural workers increased as American men entered the military to support the war

effort. The Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement, granting work contracts to approximately five million Mexicans in the United States, was signed in 1942. This program became known as the Bracero program and was in place until 1964; however, during that time, work conditions and labor laws remained unchanged (PBS, 2011). As a result of the Farmworker Movement led by Cesar Chavez during the 1960s, the U.S. enacted the Migrant Education Program (MEP) and the High School Equivalency Program (HEP). These programs were designed to meet the specific educational needs of migrant students ("Review of the motion picture *Harvest of Hope*," 1960).

Despite retention efforts throughout U.S. history, by 1986 migrant students had the lowest graduation rate in the public school systems (McGlynn, 2011; Salerno, 1991). In 1995, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, recognized the problem of migrant Hispanic student dropouts and commissioned a two-year study. The results confirmed three things. First, the majority of students participating in this study left school because no one had taken the time to establish a working relationship with them. Second, no one within the schools had held them to high academic standards. Third, the participants were not provided with achievement opportunities (Secada et al., 1998). Since this study's completion in 1998, the dropout rate has remained the highest out of any group (Chapman et al., 2011). In 2001, the Office of Migrant Education estimated the high school graduation rate of migrant youth to be at 45-50% (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010). These rates may be underestimated as it is not uncommon for schools to count dropouts only during students' senior year (Alvarez et al., 2009). It is known that many Hispanics are dropping out before their senior year, so this issue may indeed be even worse. Quantification is also difficult due to the fact that students who have not been enrolled in school are not counted as dropouts (Deitz, 2010; Mellander, 2007; Tillman, 2010). The difficulty

in quantifying the dropout rate of this unique population is addressed further in this chapter under “Out of School Youth”.

During 2002-2005 the Office of Migrant Education (OME) conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in four states. The results of this revealed seven key areas that all states were asked to consider when conducting their own needs assessments. These areas are significant because they highlight the common and collective challenges of migrant students both in school and out of school. The seven areas that limit migrant students’ success include the following:

1. Educational Continuity
2. Instructional Time
3. School Engagement
4. English Language Development
5. Education Support in the Home
6. Health
7. Access to Services (Migrant Education Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit, 2012, p. 5)

Since the 1967 origination of Title I-C (Title 1, 1981) the graduation rate of migrant students has remained a serious problem. The reasons these students dropout and/or do not enroll in school are plentiful and vast. The typical challenges include, but are not limited to: (a) frequent mobility, (b) a need to provide for their families either in the U.S. or Mexico, (c) a lack of English language skills, (d) no previous or prior education, (e) illiteracy in both their native language and English, (f) a lack of trust due to possible illegal immigration status, and (g) health issues typically caused by their work environment (McGlynn, 2011; Topeka, KS: Office of Migrant Education, 2010). In addition to the academic and language barriers, these students enter

an environment which is unfamiliar to them. They have difficulty relating to their peers, and even more so their teachers (Crews, 2007). These students' parents have a hard time understanding the educational system and how to support learning for their children (McGlynn, 2009). Value is placed on education, but it is typically not seen as a possibility (McGlynn, 2011; Vocke, 2007). These students miss out on opportunities, not because of a lack of interest from the student or parent, but instead because of a lack of understanding and knowing what is available to them. The challenges are numerous and some are unique to OSY, but the end results are the same— an underserved population of school-age students (Cook, 2010).

The age at which a student is allowed to drop out of school differs from state to state but typically falls between 16 and 18 years old (Rapoport, 2012). The age at which a student is allowed to start working also differs, although the majority of states consider 16 the age at which full-time work is legal (Fair Labor Standards Act, 1938). Even though there are labor laws in place, many exemptions allow youth younger than 16 to work in agriculture. Child labor in the field continues to be a common occurrence (Hindman, 2006). For many OSY, these rules and laws frequently do not apply or fail to protect them. Falsified documents, forged birth certificates and/or employers willing to look the other way allow under-age students, some as young as 12 years old who should be in school, to obtain employment. The work they obtain can sometimes include 16-hour workdays. A "parental exemption" included in the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) states,

> Children twelve and thirteen years old may be employed outside of school hours with written parental consent or on a farm where the minor's parent or person standing in place of the parents is also employed. Children under 12 may be employed outside of

> school hours with parental consent on a farm where employees are exempt from the Federal minimum wage provisions (p. 32).

This provision makes it easy for adult guardians to "employ" their children to work alongside them in the fields (Fair Labor Standards Act, 1938), thereby avoiding other established age requirements.

A lack of English language skills is one of the most prevalent reasons Hispanic students drop out of school. PEW Hispanic Center found that almost 40% of Latino dropouts do not have an adequate command of the English language (Fry, 2003). In states such as Arizona, California, and Massachusetts, schools have adopted "English-only" policies that limit families' bilingual services, making it even more difficult for parents/guardians to understand how to assist their students with academics (Thompson, 2009). When the discrimination these families feel is paired with the many challenges they face in living far below the poverty level, the result is students who are set up for failure (Pena, 2010). Frequent absenteeism due to anxieties, depression, and fear (Kearney, 2008), the need to work, and high mobility make OSY statistics difficult to track and all too often provide schools with an excuse not to follow up on students' transfer placement, allowing students to fall through the cracks and drop out at extremely young ages (Olatunji, 2005).

Using federal funds to find solutions to assist OSY has been an allowable practice under Title I Part C. More recently it has been recognized as a national challenge. Current literature confirms and at times lists the needs of OSY; however finding the literature that offers answers is another issue entirely. Schools are well aware of characteristics related to high school dropout rates, but what they now need are solutions (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Although the success rate of each project differs, the overall need and justification for additional research in

this area is apparent, especially as new technologies emerge that can offer a whole new world of solutions to the problems associated with OSY retention rates (Levinson & Day, 2002; Stornaiuolo, 2009).

Out of School Youth

Public schools today are better equipped to handle the many factors that cause students to drop out. However, students continue to slip through the cracks and fail to meet the requirements needed to graduate (Escort, 2007; Doll, 2010). Among the federally reported ethnic groups, Hispanics experience the lowest graduation rate. The United States Department of Education Center for Educational Statistics provides us with dropout rate data between 1990-2010. In this data, Hispanics have the highest dropout rate between students 16-24 years old. Table 1, showing the dropout rates between 1990-2010 broken down by race (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

> Thousands of this nation's Hispanic students have left school without a diploma. Some left because they felt that other life options were more viable; others left because they felt that they were being pushed out; and still others left because of family obligations. Yet almost all these students left school because no one had established individual relationships with each of them, communicated high expectations to them, and provided them with meaningful opportunities to achieve those expectations (Secada et al., 1998, p. 2).

Among this nation's Hispanic students, the largest population of students who drop out of schools continues to be migrant students (Secada et al., 1998; Hixson, 2010). The issue of migrant graduation rates was first acknowledged by Shaw in 1958 and was later made a national concern with the passing of the Migrant Education Act in 1965 (Title I, 1981). Although a

variety of programs have been implemented to increase the rate at which migrant students graduate, the dropout rate then and now continues to be 50% (Branz-Spall & Wright, 2004). The primary factors behind migrant dropout rates are as follows:

- Poverty and the need to help financially support the family
- Students being placed in lower grade levels than their same-age peers
- High mobility
- Inconsistent recordkeeping in the schools
- Limited student English proficiency along with a general lack of ESL teaching techniques from the teachers (Salerno, 1991; Atkin, 2000).

Many Hispanic students do not follow a typical educational route. The traditional path that has been established to meet the needs of the status quo often conflicts with Hispanic cultural values (Valdez, 2008). These young voices are often ignored as they are forced to conform to the way things are (Atkin, 2000). Schools' attendance, enrollment, and language polices make it difficult for migrant students to fit the profile of the average student these policies were meant to keep on track. An example of this can be seen with Ernesto. Ernesto is not a real person but his situation is based on the researcher's encounters with countless students like him. Ernesto is a student who is 16 years old and attends a local high school. When he finishes school at 3:05, he goes to the dairy to relieve his mother who has been working since 6 AM. In order for Ernesto's mother to go home to make dinner and care for the younger children, Ernesto finishes her shift. Ernesto gets home around 7:30 PM. He then eats dinner and tries to complete as much homework as possible. Ernesto is not a typical student, but is held to the same standards as his peers. If he misses a day of school to work in order to help support his family, he is still absent. Not only does he miss the necessary instruction, but the days are counted against him and

he soon loses credit due to excessive absences. Ernesto's story is similar to many migrant students, all who are unable to comply with the requirements of their schools due to situations outside of their control. Ernesto does what he does to help provide the most basic needs for himself and his family.

As mentioned in the introduction, a factor complicating quantification of the dropout rate of migrant youth is the fact that many of these students either never enroll in a U.S. school or drop out before entering high school (Salerno, 1991). Recruitment of these students is difficult because when or if they can be identified, their high rates of mobility, greater need for financial support, and early family responsibilities make traditional education impossible (Orospesa & Landale, 2009). It is also assumed by a significant segment of the U.S. population that a level of contentedness exists among migrant workers (Branz-Spall, Rosenthal, & Wright, 2003). Many people believe that migrant workers' jobs here are better than those they had in their native countries and that migrant workers are, therefore, satisfied with their current status and have no desire to educate themselves, secure higher paying work, or achieve more than what they currently have (Parra-Cardona, Bulock, Imig, Villarruel, & Gold, 2006). This is far from true. Dr. Joseph Tillman, conducted a research study, *America's Invisible Workers: A Study of Migrant Out-of-School Youth*, which looked specifically at the OSY in southwestern Kansas. He sought to identify the comprehensive needs and aspirations of these students. Seventy-five OSY were surveyed. During the survey, many repeatedly expressed a desire to achieve something better than their current condition. Tillman found participants expressed interest in one or more of the following areas: earning a GED, learning English, securing a better job, and/or developing additional life skills.

The 1995 Riley study included 10 cities where students, their families, and educators worked together to address three main goals as follows:

1) increase public awareness of the serious issue of Hispanic dropout rates,

2) develop a policy based on the combined recommendations of all involved, and

3) develop a network of individuals who would use the data collected in the report.

The study concluded that blaming the Hispanic dropout rate on the students, families, and language barriers, which is commonly done, does not address the main issues. The results of this study focused on what needed to occur to support this vulnerable population and addressed what must be in place, but also examined factors such as ineffective schools, finances, and equity in terms of educational opportunities (Secada et al., 1998).

To compound the educational challenges already faced by Hispanic youth, schools in certain areas are faced with state regulations requiring them to check the immigration status of students, which adds to the challenge of keeping migrant students in school (Green, 2003; Semple, 2011). Undocumented students already face extreme stress and unequal opportunities. To question the immigration status of this already vulnerable population only adds to their reluctance to enter or dropout of public school (Rodriguez, 2010).

Here to Work

Out of School Youth who are classified as here to work typically never walk through the doors of a public school. They are in the U.S. to earn money and prefer no additional attention. They are frequently unidentified by the local Migrant Education Programs (MEPs) and receive little to no assistance by the programs established to serve them (Title 1, 1981).

Here to Work youth are individuals whose priority is to work. These young people typically have left school in their native country and have migrated north looking for work.

According to data collected during the 2010-2012 SOSY Consortium, Here to Work youth make up 43% of the overall OSY population. In Idaho they make up 7% of the overall OSY population (Strategies-Opportunities-Services for Out of School Youth [SOSOSY], 2012). The characteristics of this population are as follows:

- Have never entered the U.S. school system
- Have up to a sixth- grade education from their native country
- Are Spanish speaking
- Are classified as Emancipated Youth or Unaccompanied Minor
- Average three moves per year

The challenge with Here to Work youth is in identification. Because many of these young people never enter the public schools, the MEPs, which typically operate out of school systems, are unaware these individuals are living and working within their districts. Unless schools are actively identifying and recruiting these individuals, they go unidentified (Strategies-Opportunities-Services for Out of School Youth, 2012).

Recovery Youth

For Out of School Youth who are classified as Recovery Youth, the educational situation is even more devastating. These students have been part of the public school system. They have been identified and funded; yet their needs continue to be unmet. Their reasons for dropping out are similar to those of Here to Work youth, but the reasons may also include established programs that have failed recovery students (Child Trends Data Bank, 2005; Topeka, KS: Office of Migrant Education, 2010). When talking with these students, it is not uncommon to hear that

somewhere in their educational history they were discouraged from enrolling, encouraged to drop out, and/or were told that graduation was not a possibility (Rodriguez et al., 2010).

For one reason or another, the young people in this category chose to drop out of school. This population, although easier to identify, still poses challenges for those looking to offer assistance. According to data collected during the 2010-2012 SOSY Consortium, Recovery Youth make up 57% of the overall OSY population. In Idaho they make up 93% of the overall OSY population ((Strategies-Opportunities-Services for Out of School Youth, 2012).

The priority of these students may or may not be work. Their reasons for leaving school vary but most commonly include the following:

- Need to work
- Loss of credits
- Excessive absences
- English learner (EL) status
- Low Test Scores
- Pregnancy. “Latinas have higher rates of teenage pregnancy than any other ethnic group” (Gandara & Contreras, 2009).

Regardless of their reasons, the fact that they are leaving school at a higher rate than any other group does not change.

A Need for Structural Change

In their book, *The Latino Education Crisis*, Gandara and Contreras highlight the drastic effects that failed social policies have had on the education of Latino students.

Education is the single most effective way to integrate the burgeoning population of Latinos into the U.S. economy and society. Thus, if the high dropout rates and low

> educational achievement of Latino youth are not turned around, we will have created a permanent underclass without hope of integrating into the mainstream or realizing their potential to contribute to American society. (2009, pp. 13-14)

Increasing the graduation rates and the academic performance of American students has been the focus of education reform since No Child Left Behind was first introduced (NCLB, 2001). The U.S. educational system must reform traditional education so historical practices can be re-evaluated and their effectiveness measured. U.S. school personnel need to be educated on all the populations within their schools to promote better understanding of the cultural context of these diverse populations. Diverse populations include but are not limited to Hispanic, English learners, and immigrant students. Schools need to assess how the American educational system is perceived by families in these groups and implement strategies and pedagogies that will empower educators to meet the educational needs of Hispanic and immigrant students (Presley-Sweeden, 2011; Bausch, 2009). Levinson and Day (2002) examined *Raices y Alas*, by Eugene E. Garcia. "Raices" are the cultural roots of Hispanic education, while "alas" are the wings that can take Hispanic children to new educational heights. In order for Hispanic students to take educational flight, a better appreciation of the culture from which they emerge must be understood. Schools must see the differences of the students they are educating, especially of OSY, one of the most vulnerable populations (Hill & Hayes, 2007).

Some of the cultural differences exist in early indicators. "Going to College Begins in Kindergarten," a public service announcement aimed at getting parents to think about their children's future at the beginning of their academic educational lives (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). In reality, kindergarten is too late. Gandara and Contreras (2009) discuss school readiness at an early age. They note,

> Large gaps in school readiness already exist between poor children and middle-class children, as well as between white and Asian children and their black and Latino peers. By third grade, it is alarmingly easy to predict who will go to college and who will not be based on reading scores (p. 250).

These drastic educational discrepancies cause many migrant youth to feel inadequate and view leaving school as their best option (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010).

Educational support is essential in assisting and encouraging migrant youth. It is imperative that educational structures be put in place to provide support opportunities. It is time for OSY to benefit from the full opportunities education can provide (Nusche, 2009; Jensen, 2011).

What Works When Supporting OSY

Escort (2007) found that positive early intervention is an effective strategy for students with multiple risk factors. This same research also noted seven effective strategies in working with migrant students. Escort (2007) suggests the following:

1) Constant monitoring of credit accrual towards graduation

2) Alternative educational programs such as basic education

3) English language instruction

4) Enrichment opportunities: extended school days, summer camps, etc.

5) GED programs

6) Work experience programs: applicable job skills that earn students credits

7) A variety of support services: academic and language tutoring, health services, and other services that help meet basic needs

In the book, *Latino High School Graduation: Defying the Odds*, Romo and Falbo (1996) found that many of the Hispanic students in their study felt the teachers and other school personnel were demeaning and made them feel demoralized. Getting pregnant, working dead-end jobs, and even staying home and watching TV offered more satisfying alternatives to school (p. 253). The research conducted by Escort (2007) and Salerno (1991) both reached similar conclusions; that is, in order for migrant students to be successful in school, services must extend beyond traditional migrant services. Cultural and family expectations of migrant youth must be taken into consideration and motivating teacher-student relationships must be established in order for the students to be effectively educated (Yunus, Osman, & Ishak, 2011). A nontraditional approach is needed, first to reach them and then to keep them in secondary and post-secondary education (Salinas & Reyes, 2004).

> Latinos typically experience a host of impediments to success in school. Any one of these barriers is daunting but to be challenged simultaneously by multiple obstacles and a lack of social, psychological, and educational support at school and in the community can and does limit the potential of many Latino students. That they survive these various hurdles to meet minimum demands of schooling and become competent citizens is a testament to human fortitude (Salinas & Reyes, 2004, p. 120).

A 2002 study conducted in California documented successful education and graduation of migrant students through the development of an educational program that incorporated the students' heritage and culture (Gibson & Livier, 2002). Latino culture was incorporated into courses, and staff all had a basic understanding of this culture. At the conclusion of the study, non-migrant Latino students were compared to the students participating in the study. Researchers found that the migrant Latino students in their program exceeded in both academics

and graduation rate when compared to their non-migrant Latino peers. The success of these students was credited to three interventions, which focused on following areas:

1) Providing social capital - key adult support for students (mentors)

2) Establishing a school culture that embraces trust and belonging

3) Structuring the school and staff training to ensure that they fully support students as they face the pressure of immediate assimilation between school and home

Educational success does exist for the OSY population. Through the structuring of educational programs that incorporate the needs of the students, this population can have a positive and successful experience. Success stories include programs such as ESTRELLA, which was an attempt to use online education to support high school migrant students moving between Texas, Michigan, and Illinois, and other programs that incorporate the culture and heritage of the students. Such programs have and can continue to make a difference in the education of students who are and will continue to be out of school (ESTRELLA, 2001; Levy, 2011).

Guidelines for Implementing Supports

Although the challenge of improving the graduation rate of migrant students has existed for decades (Shaw, 1958), there has yet to be improvement (Topeka, KS: Office of Migrant Education, 2010). One thing that remains consistent in all literature and research is the list of additional supports necessary for migrant students to graduate (*Success for Migrant Students*, 2012). Students must feel cared for, connected, and understood (Gibson & Livier, 2002). Out of School Youth also need support services that address their physiological needs, as well as counseling, transportation, and childcare (Salerno, 1991; McGlynn, 2006). In order for the migrant graduation rate to improve, these services need to be available in all schools that provide

services to migrant students. In addition, continued efforts are necessary to retrieve those who have become disenfranchised and have already chosen to drop out (Salerno, 1991).

Supports for migrant students and their families need to be provided early in their educational careers. Often a district with a large elementary migrant population will not have the same large migrant population at the high school level. The assumption made by many districts is that many more young families are moving into their community, but all too often the fact is that students are leaving school and going to work (DiMara, 2008). Glick and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) found that many Hispanic youth are more likely to drop out of school and go to work because of the educational struggles they experienced in elementary school. If a student has a negative experience in elementary school, the likelihood that he or she will drop out is far greater than for a student who feels supported and encouraged in the early years (Mathur & Parameswaran, 2011). The support needed by migrant students must begin in elementary school, follow the students through middle school, and guide them through the final levels of high school. The U.S. school system must also be able to embrace, understand, and support those migrant students who are brought back into the U.S. public school system, or Here to Work Youth entering for the first time (Lossa, 2010).

Using Technology to Support Out of School Youth

Today's schools are being asked to do more with less. In 2008, 45 states received significant cuts to education and many have continued to face various cuts each year since (McNichol, Oliff, & Johnson, 2012). Traditional education is changing, and as it changes, school communities are seeing more technology incorporated as a means to provide a viable alternative for direct instruction (Collins & Halverson, 2009). The world students must navigate centers on a high level of technological proficiency (Fox & Livingston, 2007). The Sloan Consortium

conducted a study to determine how many students had participated in online courses during the 2007-2008 school year. The study estimated that 1,030,000 students K-12 had participated in online learning, which was an increase of 47% since the first survey was conducted in 2005-2006 (Picciano & Seaman, 2009). Although K-12 schools have implemented online education at a slower rate than higher education, it is something that is becoming more and more prevalent. *Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning,* a review of state-level policy and practices, documents that online schools,

> serve a wide variety of student types and often reach students whose needs are not being completely met by their brick-and-mortar schools, such as students unable to take a physical school course due to lack of availability or a scheduling conflict. The mission statements for some programs target particular student populations, such as rural students, students from high-poverty districts, or students from low-performing schools. (Watson, 2005, p. 11)

Using online education to meet the needs of students whose needs are going unmet in the brick-and-mortar school is obviously nothing new.

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Migrant Education funded the study entitled *Encouraging Students through Technology to Reach High Expectations in Learning, Life Skills, and Achievement* (ESTRELLA, 2001). ESTRELLA used technology as a bridge for migrant students, connecting their constant mobility and their academic needs. All the students who participated were home-based in the Rio Grande Valley or Winter Garden area of Texas. In the early spring, they moved to Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, or New York where they remained during the summer months, typically returning to Texas in the late fall. The students in this project received laptop computers equipped with modems and NovaNet, an online curriculum

(Kinser, Pessin, & Meyertholen, 2001). Courses were assigned to students based on recommendations from their high school counselors and were based on their graduation plans. All courses were offered in English and were developed to meet national accreditation standards. After the end of the research funding cycle, the program boasted a completion rate of over 90%. According to the project report, students accumulated numerous high school credits that otherwise would have been lost. Due to reasons not explained, funding was not renewed and the project was discontinued.

Educational programs such as ESTRELLA that can effectively meet the needs of OSY are needed to offer flexibility and versatility to a one-size-fits-all educational system. OSY are not traditional 16-year-olds worried about getting their driver's license; they are young people who typically are faced with providing or, at the very least, contributing to their families' basic life necessities (Atkin, 2000).

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Chapter III outlines the design and methods of this research. *"*Methods are the tools that researchers use to collect data" (Hessey-Biber & Leavy, 2013, p. 5). Various techniques are used to learn about the world around us. The research tools used allow collection of insight or data from various individuals typically representing a larger group within society. For this study, the participants were a group of seven individuals who were considered to be Out of School Youth prior to their enrollment and participation in an online high school. This group of participants is representative of OSY because prior to enrolling in the online high school, each member was either a Recovery Youth or a Here to Work Youth. Out of the seven participants in this study, six were Recovery Youth and one was Here to Work.

This chapter serves as the action plan by defining the research tools used. It is divided into five sections: research design, participants, data collection, analytical methods, and limitations. Each of these sections gives an in-depth description of the research and how it seeks to answer the research questions.

Variables. Within this research design, there were multiple variables. Variables refer to differences between the participants. In his book *Using Statistics to Make Educational Decisions,* Tanner (2011) refers to qualitative variables *,* as differences by category rather than amount. The identified variables within this study are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Variables

Variable
1) Gender
2) OSY classification: Here to Work or Recovery Youth
3) The location in which the interviews took place
4) The language in which the interviews were conducted (English or Spanish)
5) Country of birth
6) Education levels

Research Design

Because the topic of Out of School Youth is fairly new and very little research exists, a qualitative approach is fitting in order to gain holistic knowledge and insight into this distinctive population. Under the umbrella of qualitative research, an ethnographic approach was chosen. By following an ethnographic approach, the researcher was able to investigate and analyze the information presented by the participants. Each participant was interviewed twice using a semi-structured interview process. The purpose of the semi-structured interview questions was to allow each participant the flexibility to share his or her experiences. By interviewing and treating each participant as an individual, the researcher was able to collect individual stories and life experiences. Observing the participants and how they responded to the questions in an environment where they were comfortable helped the researcher gain valuable insight. Once each individual had the chance to tell his/her story, the researcher was able to take an inductive approach by looking collectively at all participants' responses. The three research questions were investigated to gain insight into the culture, beliefs, and experiences of each participant.

After reviewing and analyzing the responses of each participant, the transcripts were coded and common themes were identified. Reoccurring or common themes lead the researcher to make final conclusive statements, which will help others who are working with OSY. The strongest research design to develop conclusive statements from the perception of the participants is a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the researcher investigated the educational experiences of OSY, their credit accrual in an online high school compared to their credit accrual in a traditional high school, and what they felt would help them overcome some of the challenges they faced. The "whole person" was considered in determining what supports were needed to overcome the many barriers faced by OSY in both online and traditional educational settings. This qualitative approach focused on collecting their educational histories, their academic records, and suggestions from each participant. The participants were asked their suggestions so student-generated guidance could be offered to educational providers. Questions were asked to gain insight and suggestions in the following areas:

- What would or could make your school experience more effective?
- What supports are needed to best aid your academic learning?
- How did your experience in an online high school compare to prior educational experiences in a traditional setting? (Gonzalez-Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010).

This qualitative research focused on the following questions:

1. What were the educational experiences of the OSY participants?
2. How did credit accrual for the OSY who attend the online school differ from that in a traditional setting?

3. What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY in both the traditional and virtual settings?

The author set out to answer the three questions listed above by utilizing an ethnographic approach. Seven participants who met the criteria in Table 2 were identified and asked to participate in this case study.

Table 2

Criteria for Participation

Variable
1) Participated in the online high school for a minimum of two semesters
2) Had current migrant status (eligible for Certification of Eligibility (COE))
3) Met the definition of OSY prior to enrolling in online high school

The online high school was chosen for this study because of the attempts of its administration and teachers to develop an online education program to meet the needs of OSY. Board approval to conduct research at the online high school, using information obtained from the facility, was received in June of 2012 (Appendix B) with the final approval from Northwest Nazarene University Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) being granted in July of 2012 (Appendix C).

Participants were identified first by obtaining educational records from the online high school of those students meeting the required criteria. Upon re-enrollment during the fall semester, these individuals were asked to participate based on their abilities to meet required criteria. Criteria included: (1) having a current COE, (2) meeting the definition of OSY prior to entering the online high school, and (3) having previous attendance at the online high school.

Individuals who met the first two criteria but had not previously attended the online high school were not eligible to participate due to their lack of online high school experience. Individuals who had successfully completed graduation at the online high school were also contacted and recruited for this study. All eligible participants were contacted through the use of a confederate. The confederate conducted all initial conversations in Spanish. Out of the 22 eligible participants, 7 were willing to participate.

In order to effectively conduct this research, a translator and interpreter were used to ensure complete and thorough understanding of the consent to participate along with all semi-structured interview questions. All consent forms were available to participants in written and audio form and in both English and Spanish. During interviews, all participants had the option of having questions asked in English or Spanish. Once participants were identified, the research was explained to them in the language of their preference. The researcher then asked each participant to sign an informed consent. Guardians of minor participants were asked to sign an informed consent (Appendix D) with minor participants signing an informed consent (Appendix E) and an assent (Appendix F). The researcher's contact information along with the contact information for the interpreter was distributed in case any questions or concerns arose. Two interviews were conducted during the months of September, October, and November of 2012. During the interviews, participants were asked a set of semi-structured questions. Interview questions were designed to be close-ended when obtaining basic demographic information and open-ended when investigating the three research questions. Additional information was collected when needed to further elaborate on the answer proposed by the participant. By asking each participant questions into his or her history, experiences, and suggestions, the researcher

was able to gather information and evaluate the experiences and suggestions of the individual (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). See Appendix G for survey questions.

All interviews were recorded using the researcher's phone and transcribed to allow the researcher the most accurate data collection. The participant determined the location of each interview; however, the researcher did direct the participants to locations that were conducive to conducting interviews. For the most part, interviews occurred in the participant's place of residence. The first interview, not including obtaining signed consent, lasted about 45 minutes. Before the interview began, the researcher explained further details about the research and how or why the individual qualified. Many of the participants had little knowledge of the Migrant Education Program or that they qualified as migrant. The second interview was much more relaxed for the participants and lasted on average of 30 minutes. The participants were much more willing to share information during the second interview and appeared to be more at ease with the process.

After each interview was conducted and the audio recording transcribed, the interviewer coded and highlighted reoccurring themes. Member checking of the final themes was conducted to ensure accurate data. Although each participant was asked to verify their responses, only five of the participants replied to the member checking emails, phone calls, and letters. The data was then categorized into useful information.

The final product outlined information beneficial to traditional and online schools. A sample program was also developed and can be found in Chapter VI. The purpose of the sample program is to give schools a tool that will assist in the development of an educational program conducive to meeting the needs of OSY. A program built on this foundation will create an optimal learning environment designed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY. This will not

only help students succeed, but will also assist schools in reaching a population that traditionally has not found levels of success equal to the majority student population in U.S. schools.

Online High School. The online high school included in this study is a virtual high school located in a northwest state. The online high school is an accredited public charter school, serving all students regardless of race, gender, national origin, and/or academic ability. Many charters are founded because they want to educate differently and therefore have a specific focus. The focus of the online charter in this study is to work effectively with students who experience learning differences. Such students include, but are not limited to, special education students, English learners, teen parents, homeless youth, unaccompanied or emancipated youth, returning dropouts, and at risk youth. The various populations are all incorporated into the services provided by the online school. Individual learning plans are developed for each participant with the ending goal always being graduation.

Free and Appropriate Public Education is provided by providing each student with access to public education through an online platform. Curriculum for the classes includes Compass, Grad Point, and other teacher-developed materials. The majority of classes are offered in English; however, some courses are also available in Spanish. All students enrolled at the online high school receive a laptop or desktop computer to use while enrolled. Students also receive a monthly stipend to assist in covering the cost of Internet access. Internet access is fully provided for students who meet eligible criteria. Individual and small group tutoring occurs both synchronously and face-to-face. Enrolled students are also able to access a computer lab for face-to-face tutoring.

The teachers at the online school hold valid teaching certificates in the northwest state in which the school is located. All teachers are also considered highly qualified teachers (HQT) as

defined by the federal government. Each teacher at the online high school is assigned a homeroom. The homeroom requirements include weekly contact with the student and family to review grades, answer questions, and go over general progress and pacing guides. Weekly contact can include face-to-face meetings, phone calls, emails, instant messaging, or texting; however, teachers are required to call families a minimum of one time per month. The purpose of the homeroom and required contacts is to encourage relationship building between the student and teacher and then the parent and teacher. The administration feels that it is important to establish this relationship and create a safe point of contact so both the student and parents feel comfortable reaching out to someone associated with the school.

All courses offered from the online high school are aligned with State and/or Common Core Standards. Each course is designed to be rigorous and complete. Courses are designed to be one credit, which means they have an estimated time of 60 hours each. Online courses include core academics along with electives. Online courses are primarily offered in English, although some classes are available in Spanish.

Graduation requirements align with state minimum expectations from the northwest state. These requirements are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Online High School Graduation Requirements

Subject	**Number of Credits**
English	8 credits
Math	6 credits (must include a minimum of Algebra 1 & Geometry)
Science	6 credits (must include 4 credits of lab science)

Social Studies	5 credits 2 U.S. History 2 U.S. Government 1 Economics
Speech	1 credit
Health	1 credit
Humanities	2 credits
Electives	17 credits
Other Requirements	Proficiency or comparable on state achievement tests Participation in any approved college entrance exam

Participants

Hidden Population. When researching unique populations, which can be difficult to locate due to specific qualifications, a label or title of Hidden Population is assigned. This category was first used in the social sciences and was applied to populations that were difficult to identify.

> "Hidden populations" euphemistically refers to those who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised: the homeless and transient, chronically mentally ill, high school dropouts, criminal offenders, prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, gang members, runaways, and other "street people"-those we are all aware of to one degree or another, yet know so little about. (National Institute on Drug Abuse United States, 1990, p. 1)

Out of School Youth fall into this category for many reasons, and some OSY include the following: dropouts, unaccompanied minors, and possibly undocumented or illegal immigrants. Although many educators may not be unfamiliar with the term OSY, they are familiar with the existence of students who are not attending. The population of OSY is therefore known, but there

is not a great deal of information available to identify or define this population. This is very typical of hidden populations. “These are all groups whose existence is known but about whom we do not know a great deal” (Singer, Schensul, LeCompte, Cromley, & Trotter II, 1999, p. 128). With that being said, the participants in this research study were at one time identified as OSY, but due to their enrollment into the online charter school, they moved away from the label of OSY and become only migrant. This does not negate the fact that their needs still resemble those of OSY, and they are highly vulnerable because of this. The information collected through this ethnographic study was used to identify the themes related to the experiences of the participants. The identification of OSY is a very time-intensive task. To better support them the researcher used this group of previously identified but currently recovered OSY.

Specific research techniques have been identified to help researchers develop studies that include hidden populations. These models include “membership and sampling procedures as well as various ethnographic tools such as case study and association study” (Tillman, 2010, p.12). The participants included in this research study were a group of previously identified OSY.

Program Participants. Participants for the research were first identified by the Idaho online school as individuals who met the following criteria: (1) met the definition of migrant as established by the U.S. Department of Education, (2) were considered OSY before enrolling in the online high school, and (3) had completed a minimum of two semesters in the online high school. Each of the identified students was classified as one of the following:

1) Here to Work, usually from Mexico or Central America or

2) Recovery Youth who had previously been enrolled in a United States public school system but had dropped out (Office of Migrant Education, 2010).

Both categories, Here to Work and Recovery Youth, make up the growing OSY population (Solutions for Out of School Youth, 2010). Very similar to the SOSY Consortium definition of Out of School Youth, is the definition provided by the Interstate Migrant Education Council (Interstate Migrant Education Council, 2002). Participants for this study were between 16 and 21 years old, and prior to participating in the local online program, had either dropped out of or never entered a U.S. school.

The participants in this study represent an accurate picture of OSY who participated in the online high school; however, the demographics are not typical in the overall OSY population. OSY tend to be male, while the participants in this study were 71% female. While participants in this study offer valuable information that can be used to assist OSY, results are based on the demographics found within the group as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants' Demographics

Demographic	Description
Gender	2: Male 5: Female
Ethnicity	1: Mexican-American 6: Mexican
Age	1: 17yr old 3: 18yr old 1: 20yr old 2: 21yr old
Place of Birth	2: Native born 5: Foreign born
Language Preference	4: English 3: Spanish
Grade when Participant Dropped Out	1: 9th Grade 3: 10th Grade 3: 11th Grade
Marital Status	5: Single 2: Married
Number of Children	2: No Children 1: Currently pregnant 3: 1 child 1: 2 children
Employment Status	1: Working 3: Work seasonally 1: Not employed, not looking 2: Not employed, looking
Educational Goals	2: High school diploma 1: Technical certification 4: College

Twenty-two individuals were identified as meeting the necessary criteria in order to participate in this study. Multiple attempts were made, including phone calls, emails, and letters, to gain participation from eligible individuals. At the end of the recruiting campaign, the researcher had seven participants who signed or had their guardian sign the Informed Consent. Any participant under the age of 18 was also asked to sign an Assent. The seven individuals participating in this study are representative of the twenty-two, re-enrolled OSY; however, they are not fully representative of the overall OSY population due to their re-enrollment and for some, first-time enrollment in the online high school. Additionally, OSY in the northwestern state involved in this study have a higher percentage of females than does the overall population. In the data collected during the 2011-2012 school year, the overall population breakdown was 66% male and 34% female (Strategies-Opportunities-Services for Out of School Youth [SOSOSY], 2012). The participants in this study were 71% female and 29% male. However, their life experiences and their initial education experiences are representative of the overall OSY population.

After the research was thoroughly explained and consent (assent for minor participants) was obtained, the researcher conducted two face-to-face interviews for each participant. The questions asked during these interviews related to their experience in both their traditional education setting and their experience in the online setting. Characteristics of these participants are outlined in Table 2.

Data Collection

Before data could be collected, the interview questions needed to be designed. The researcher developed the structured and semi-structured interview questions while keeping the three research questions in mind. Once the research questions were developed, pilot interviews

were conducted. The pilot interviews consisted of two participants. Two separate interviews were conducted with each participant. Piloting the research questions allowed the researcher to "understand oneself as a researcher" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 96). The pilot interviews also offered the researcher valuable insight into the strength and effectiveness of the research questions themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). By piloting the research questions, the researcher strengthened the research proposal and was then ready to proceed in conducting the interviews. No questions were eliminated as a result of the pilot; however, the researcher was able to make minor changes to the order in which the questions were asked to achieve a better flow with the questioning.

After completing the necessary procedures to obtain consent, the researcher scheduled individual meeting times with each participant. The location was determined along with a date and time. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Initial questions were asked based on demographics, family background, and historical educational information. At the conclusion of the first interview, a second interview was scheduled. During the second interview, the researcher again used semi-structured questioning techniques focusing on the reviewing of previous information discussed, challenges, and necessary supports. The second interview focused on revisiting the previous data collected and elaborating on what the participant felt was necessary to be successful in school. The goal of the researcher during the interview process was to allow the students to convey their needs and give them a chance to be heard, and then make their responses available to assist schools in helping future students with similar characteristics.

Individuals involved in the data collection included the primary researcher and an interpreter as needed. The same interpreter was used in all interviews when services were requested. Participants were asked at the time the interviews were scheduled which language

they would prefer their interviews to be conducted in. All data was collected from participants who were enrolled in the online high school during the 2010-2011 and/or the 2011-2012 school years.

Analytical Methods

After having completed two interviews with each participant, the audio recordings from each interview were transcribed. The transcribed interviews were then evaluated individually. After thorough evaluation of the individual interviews, the researcher began to look at the data as a whole. Interviews were coded by hand with a total of 96 codes emerging. Broad categories were assigned as the researcher organized the research based on patterns, similarities, and experiences. The researcher was able to categorize the codes into four domain areas, which became the themes of the research. By using broad categories, the researcher was able to categorize data and identify reoccurring themes.

In order to validate the final product, the researcher had each participant review his or her own transcription, especially focusing on the direct quotes. To ensure accurate data, member checking was used throughout the writing of this research (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Member checking was conducted by consulting with the participants when direct quotes were used. To ensure accurate information was conveyed, each participant also checked his or her individual story. In Chapters V & VI the combined results of the participants can be seen through the final data analysis and evaluation of the three emerging themes that resulted from the research.

Limitations

After this research was conducted, various limitations presented themselves. Seven Out of School Youth took part in this research study out of twenty-two who were identified as

eligible. The seven participants accurately depicted the twenty-two who also were enrolled in the online high school, but not necessarily the entire population of OSY. The individuals who participated in this research were at one time considered OSY, but chose to enroll in the online high school. For the majority of OSY, the opportunity or knowledge of online programs are rare. The researcher sees this as a limitation but also a chance for other educational providers to use this research to design effective programs. Effective educational programs are necessary in order to educate this underserved population.

Other limitations to this research include the participants' educational backgrounds, technological competency, and their ability to work independently. All of these things affect an individual's ability to perform in any school setting, but have an even greater impact in an online high school. Participants' educational backgrounds could also affect their success or failure in each course. All online program participants receive an orientation upon enrollment; however, students must have a basic understanding of technology in order to access the programs independently. A basic understanding of technology includes: (1) navigating to and using the Internet, (2) sending and checking emails, and (3) using a username/password in order to access online curriculum.

In order to succeed in online course work, a student must be able to work independently. A highly qualified teacher (HQT) is always available to facilitate the courses. However, the student must access the curriculum and materials. Students must be able to manage their time adequately to complete course work in a timely manner. Teacher-initiated communication occurs a minimum of two times per month, but if questions arise at any time during the course, students need to initiate teacher contact. Typical contact includes but is not limited to emails, telephone calls, text messages, instant messaging, and/or face-to-face meetings.

Chapter IV

Participant Profiles

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the educational history and personal background of the seven Out of School Youth participants. Information was obtained through 14 (2 for each participant) face-to-face and telephone interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect his or her identity. This chapter will include a general summary of demographic information and a full summary of each participant. The general demographics and education of each participant is described in Tables 5 and 6. This information is important to take into consideration because it allows the reader to gain background knowledge for each participant.

Table 5

Each Participant's Age, Length of Time in the United States, and Number of Moves in the Last Three Years

Participant	Description
Maria	17 years old 17 years in the United States 8 moves
Adrian	18 years old 12 years in the United States 3 moves
Jose	21 years old 10 years in the United States 2 moves
Lupe	18 years old 4 years in the United States 3 moves
Rosa	20 years old 1 year in the United States 4 moves
Esperanza	21 years old 21 years in the United States 4 moves
Marta	18 years old 1 year in the United States 3 moves

Table 6

Participants' Educational Information

	Maria	Adrian	Jose	Lupe	Rosa	Esperanza	Marta
Grade when they dropped out	11th	10th	10th	9th	11th	11th	10th
Reason for dropping out	Lost credits	Absences	School was hard	Lost a year of HS after moving	Didn't have enough credits	School lost records	Absences
Last grade completed in school	Currently enrolled – 11th	Graduated 2012	Currently enrolled – 12th	Currently enrolled – 12th	Currently enrolled – 12th	Currently enrolled – GED Prep	Currently enrolled – 10th
Ed level of father	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	8th Grade	3rd Grade	Unknown
Country	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
Ed level of mother	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	9th Grade	9th Grade	12th Grade	8th Grade
Country	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	U.S.A.	Mexico

Profiles

Maria. Maria is a 17-year-old student who was born in Mexico. She first moved to the United States as an infant. She grew up speaking Spanish, but learned English while in school. Her family speaks only Spanish, but she and her sister are able to communicate in, and prefer, English. Maria's family has qualified as migrant her entire life. In the last three years, Maria has lived in seven states but has moved over 15 times. Her family is currently in a semi-permanent residence. Her father travels at least one week per month seeking qualifying work. The family accompanies him on occasion but only when they will be traveling a week or less. Maria qualified as an OSY because of her choice to first leave school during her sophomore year.

Maria is a very bright student who is able to openly articulate her history and struggle. She instantly opened up during conversations and was very outgoing. Maria's biggest frustration with her educational experiences thus far was rooted in her perception of feeling penalized due to her family's moving. At 17, Maria should be graduating in 2013. Instead, she will be taking additional courses during the summer in hopes of recouping lost credits. It is her goal to graduate during the spring of 2014. Maria never missed more than a week of school; however, she reported that through frequent moves, schools lost transcripts, records did not reach her new schools, course options differed among schools, and academic calendars did not align.

After dropping out of traditional high school when she learned she would have to repeat her sophomore year, Maria transferred to the online high school. The counselor at her local high school recommended that instead of dropping out, she consider enrolling in a local online program. The new educational program would offer her the flexibility she needed by allowing her to complete her work anywhere. The next day, Maria contacted the virtual school and enrolled the next month.

Maria is a very motivated student who has historically struggled in math but displays a very diligent and dedicated work ethic. She received all credits attempted during her first semester at the online school and is currently passing all of her classes. Maria did say she really likes the flexibility offered through the virtual environment. She is able to help her family much more while staying current with her academic requirements. When traveling with her father, she is able to continue her schoolwork because of the data card provided by the school. The data card allows her to have Internet access anywhere she goes. She said her experience in traditional school was always good, but she prefers the assistance she receives in the virtual environment.

Her schoolwork is manageable and she is able to complete it at any time during the day. When asked how she would improve the online high school, she stated that a quicker turnaround in communication would be helpful. She said teachers typically respond to her by end of the day, but at times immediate assistance would be advantageous. She also said she misses the socialization she experienced in traditional school. She knows the virtual school has activities in which she could participate, but transportation is not provided and is a challenge for her family, especially when her father is traveling. She said she would not change any of the choices she has made and would do virtual school earlier. She would encourage other students who are facing the same challenges (frequent moves prior to entering into the online school) to try the flexibility of the virtual environment. She did want to caution future students that it is not easier, but it does provide more flexibility.

When Maria was asked about the importance of education, she quickly responded that education is very important to her. Her parents always emphasized the importance of education. She was taught that education would help her get a better job so she would not have to move frequently and become part of the family's next generation of migrant workers. Maria's parents believe that a good education will allow her to get a good job and will allow her a stable life. Maria expressed dreams of becoming an actress and has a plan of going to college to major in acting, but realizes she must first complete high school. Maria is planning on applying for a College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) Scholarship to help her pay for college.

Adrian. Adrian was very shy at first. He responded to questions in a very quiet voice and looked at the floor or wall during most of the initial questions. Adrian offered more information when the researcher explained that the purpose of the questions was to improve opportunities for

other students in similar circumstances. He gradually opened up and responded more fully to the questions.

Adrian was born in Mexico and his family moved to join his dad in the United States when he was 6 years old. He grew up speaking Spanish. Spanish is the language spoken in his home. He learned English when he entered the U.S. school system. He said he was comfortable communicating in English by the time he was 10 years old. He chose to participate in the interviews using English. Adrian qualifies for the migrant education program because his family spends winters in Mexico and returns to the U.S. once the planting season begins. Adrian first dropped out of a U.S. school during his junior year. He has missed a lot of school due to medical issues. The medical issues, combined with his family's annual migration between Mexico and the United States, caused him to get behind in his schoolwork. Adrian said he frequently had the impression that school personnel were annoyed with him and his family. He felt they discouraged him from enrolling because they knew he would be leaving during the winter and would not receive credits due to absences. According to Adrian, he enjoyed the time he spent attending traditional school. While he was there, he felt most of his teachers and classmates accepted him and treated him like any other student. School personnel told Adrian that at the rate he was going, he would never receive enough credits to graduate before reaching the age of 21. Adrian was very discouraged and dropped out shortly after.

Adrian learned about virtual high school from his sister, who had heard about the program from a friend and had gathered the information Adrian would need to enroll. Adrian met with school staff and decided it was something he could successfully achieve. He enrolled and started classes. Five hours is what Adrian reported as the length of his average school day. He likes the online program because he can go at his own pace. When he is confident in a subject, he

can go through it quicker, testing out of sections he is proficient in. When he comes across material that is new or more difficult, he has the flexibility of slowing down and taking more time. Adrian indicated that he receives help from a teacher usually once a week. He receives this extra tutoring by going into the computer lab and meeting with the teacher. He said he likes going to the computer lab because he can get one-on-one help. It also gives him a chance to socialize with his peers. When asked what he would change about the virtual school, he said he misses his friends and hanging out with them. Adrian particularly emphasized how much he enjoyed traditional school. He wished he could have had the flexibility of virtual school in the traditional education environment.

Adrian said he chose to attend virtual school primarily because of his parents. He said they have always encouraged him to get an education because they believe a higher paying job comes from a good education. They frequently tell him to take advantage of the opportunities available to him because they were never given those options. He went back to school because he wanted to make his parents proud. When asked about his future plans, he said he would graduate in May of 2013 and is currently applying to a state university to start in the fall of 2013. When asked if he had chosen a major, he smiled and said he did not know. He has some misgivings about the whole idea of going to college because he knows it will be hard, but it is something he wants to do. He then added that it is hard to think of life beyond the agricultural fields.

Jose. Jose is Adrian's brother, and the similar mannerisms were immediately evident. Jose was very soft spoken and frequently asked the researcher to clarify the questions. Jose was not as sure of himself as Adrian. It took a little longer to gain his confidence and make him feel at ease with the interview. Jose is three years older than Adrian, but entered virtual high school

after his brother. He said he finally enrolled after receiving encouragement from his brother and parents.

Jose was 9 years old when he joined his father in the United States. He too related stories about frequent moves between the United States and Mexico. Jose began the interview by saying school was always hard. Jose was asked if he felt school was hard because he missed a minimum of six weeks during the middle of the year. Jose smiled and replied, "No" as he looked downward. He said he was not the best student and school was just hard for him, especially math. Jose said he was on an IEP and had to do his math in the special education classroom because he needed extra help. Jose dropped out of a traditional high school when he was 16 years old. He was then encouraged to enroll in an alternative school. He said the alternative school was also hard, so he dropped out again after being enrolled for just over one year.

Jose said he enrolled because he knew his parents really wanted all of their children to get a good education. He was fifth in the order of birth and all his older siblings had graduated from high school in Mexico or the United States, or had received a GED. Jose was very reluctant and did not get off to a positive start. He was assigned courses he would need to graduate, but did very little work. Jose said he did not start right away because he told himself it was too hard and he would not be able to do it. Jose said he received frequent phone calls and emails from his teachers and advisors but still could not motivate himself to actually start his course work. It was not until his older sister, who already graduated from high school, discovered that he was not doing his work that he finally opened the computer and got started. His sister would call the school to find out if he was completing his assignments; she would then call his parents to let them know what he needed to accomplish each day. Jose clarified that he received a lot of teacher support, but it was his sister who finally motivated him to finish. Once Jose began

accessing the courses, it took him about a month to become comfortable with the computer programs and what he needed to do. Jose was able to do better in his course work because he could hear the instruction and read it. If something was difficult, he would go back and redo the lesson. Jose said his proudest moment was when he took the state assessment during his final year in the virtual school. He had previously taken the assessment numerous times in his traditional school and had passed all areas except his math. During his final year, Jose took the assessment again and passed his math test with a proficient score. Jose said that was the first time he felt confident with his schoolwork.

If he had it to do all again, Jose would have started virtual school sooner. He enjoyed his experiences at his traditional high school but thought he could never do the course work. He said he felt slow and different from everyone else. Jose credits his success to his family and the flexibility provided by virtual school. Jose became a father during his last year of high school and said his responsibility to provide for his child motivated him to apply himself more diligently. He wants to be able to provide a better future for his child. Jose graduated in May of 2012 and is currently working. He said he hopes to be able to attend art school so he can design video games. Jose showed the researcher a few of his drawings, which were very impressive.

Lupe. Lupe is an 18-year-old student who moved to the United States at the beginning of her sophomore year. Lupe expressed being more comfortable communicating in Spanish, so the interview was conducted in Spanish and then translated. After moving to the United States, Lupe's parents immediately enrolled her in a local school. Lupe was told that none of her credits from Mexico would transfer so she would need to start in ninth grade. Lupe said the educational system was very different. The school's expectations and processes often confused Lupe and her family. Lupe said she completed every class to which she was assigned and never received a

grade below 70%. During her final year of high school, Lupe was informed that she would not be allowed to graduate. She had 44 credits (42 were required to graduate); however, she had not earned the minimum number of credits in each subject area required for graduation. She would need six additional classes, which she would have to take the following year. Lupe indicated that she became discouraged and chose to drop out. At a later date, Lupe received a call from the school counselor informing her about a virtual high school that would enable her to take classes online, and the program required fewer credits for graduation. Some courses would be available for her to take in Spanish, which would help her comprehend the material. She enrolled and started her course work immediately but found it very difficult. She was falling behind and had less than two months before she hoped to graduate. Lupe was able to work on one class at a time, averaging completion of one course every two and a half weeks. She finished two courses during summer school and had just one more to complete during the fall of 2013.

As of spring semester 2013, Lupe was still enrolled in the virtual high school and planned to finish. She was expecting her first child and said her plan was to graduate before the child's birth. When questioned about the challenges she faced in the traditional school, she stated that her experience was good, but she did not understand all the expectations. Courses were difficult because they were in English, and many of her teachers spoke very rapidly. Lupe stated that she liked virtual school because it helped her to be able to take some courses in Spanish, leaving the ones she had to take in English to be done at her own pace. She was able to pause instructions, re-read them, and repeat any that were unclear. When asked about the negative side of virtual instruction, Lupe said she wished she could have practiced her English a little more. She said all instruction was done on the computer and she had little opportunity to communicate with other

students also trying to learn English. Lupe did say she would encourage students who were in similar situations to try enrollment in virtual high school.

Rosa. Of all of the participants in this research study, Rosa was the only one to have never attended traditional high school in the United States and had the least amount of time in virtual school. Rosa moved to the United States when she was 18 to join her boyfriend who had been living in the United States for the past year. Rosa had almost graduated from high school in Mexico, but was missing a few courses. Those she had taken in Mexico included Trigonometry, Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, and a variety of other advanced-level courses. Rosa explained that she had planned to finish school and attend college in Mexico, but did not have enough money to do so. She came to the United States to accompany her boyfriend working in the fields and brought her son with her. She was hired immediately and found herself tending and harvesting corn, beans, and a variety of fruits. At this point, Rosa stated that she did not know what her future would hold, but she had never given up on her dream of finishing school.

During her lunch break on one of the days she was working in the fields, two ladies asked to speak with anyone under the age of 21 who had not finished high school. They told her about a virtual education program for which she might qualify. She was given information and she called the next day, learning that the semester was about to start. Rosa scheduled an appointment and brought her transcripts from Mexico. School staff copied everything she brought and informed her that she was eligible to attend. She would be required to complete approximately 15 credits and meet a few other requirements to earn a U.S. diploma, so Rosa enrolled immediately. Rosa said she was very lucky that the school provided her with a laptop and Internet access because neither was available to her through any other avenue. She said she knew

how to use the computer, so it was easy to figure out course access. Some of her classes were in Spanish, but most that she needed were in English.

At interview time, Rosa was still enrolled. She said that she particularly likes math and English as a Second Language (ESL). She said she communicates primarily with her advisor who is Spanish speaking. When asked what the school could do to better support her, she indicated it would be helpful if more of her teachers spoke Spanish, but she was happy she had as many Spanish-speaking instructors as she did. She told the interviewer that more classes offered in Spanish would be helpful as well as opportunities to practice English. Her family always encouraged her to attend school, and she had always wanted to finish high school and go to college. Rosa will be the first in her family to graduate from high school, and she is pleased that her family is so proud of her.

Rosa is scheduled to graduate from high school in the spring of 2013. She is filling out college applications with a plan to study Interior Design. Rosa said she would encourage anyone who qualifies to enroll in virtual school. She struggles with English but has found that people at the school are available to help explain things to her.

Esperanza. Esperanza is a young woman who was very willing to participate in this research study. She, like most of the participants, had a story to tell and wanted someone to listen. Esperanza recently turned 21 years old and knows she has to finish high school by the end of the 2013 spring semester. Esperanza is married, but her husband is unable to be in the United States. He was deported during the fall of 2011. She is now alone raising their two young children. She has qualified as migrant her entire life due to her family's recurrent travel between Arizona, Idaho, and Mexico. Esperanza speaks fluent English and Spanish. She grew up speaking primarily English with her mother and Spanish with her father. She first entered the

U.S. school system when she was 5 years old and has attended every year until her junior year. She said her family moved a lot. No matter where they were, her mother always made sure she was enrolled in school.

During the beginning of what should have been Esperanza's junior year, they returned to Arizona. When she tried to enroll in the local Arizona high school, she was told that there was no record that she ever attended or received any credits. She was then informed that she would have to start over as a freshman. Esperanza said she was very discouraged and instead chose to drop out. She moved to Idaho right before turning 20 years old. While working in the fields, Esperanza was approached by a migrant recruiter who told her about various educational opportunities. She immediately enrolled in the online high school and decided to take courses that would allow her to earn credits towards graduation in case they were able to locate her transcripts. In addition, she knew she was working on courses that would equip her to take the GED.

Esperanza has been diligently working on her course work. She said she has appreciated the opportunity the online high school offers her because she can do it from home. She can do her work while raising her children and taking care of her home. She would not be able to attend a traditional setting because she has no one to watch her children. She does not see how she could continue her education if it were not for the flexibility offered through the virtual program. Her goal is to be finished with her courses by May of 2013. She is attempting to find a virtual program that will allow her to work on her post-secondary education from home. Esperanza's goal is to be a paramedic and/or medical translator.

When asked about her traditional school experience, Esperanza said that she remembers always enjoying school, the teachers and other students. When asked what could have been done

differently to help her be more successful, she indicated that her greatest challenge was her family's frequent and repeated moves. She understands the necessity for her family to be constantly moving, but she wishes she had been able to continue school. When asked about the virtual school, she said it had been wonderful, though she wishes she could have enrolled sooner. She feels the curriculum, supports, and teachers have been great. Her only challenge in the virtual world is maintaining sufficient self-motivation to do what is necessary to maintain her educational momentum and not fall behind. She averages four hours of schoolwork per day. She encourages others to try the virtual high school. She said it is better than always losing credits due to moving and is something migrant students can accomplish if they are persistent.

Marta. Marta was the final participant interviewed. She moved to the United States in the winter of 2011 and immediately enrolled in the local brick and mortar high school. She primarily speaks Spanish, although she is learning English and understands much of what is said. Her parents have always encouraged her to get an education. They were able to attend some school growing up, but not enough to avoid a migrant lifestyle. Her experiences in the local high school were challenging. She would frequently get headaches that necessitated leaving class. She proceeded to miss more classes as the school year progressed. When she discussed her predicament with her high school counselor, he informed her that she had already lost all credits for the semester due to absences, so there was no reason for her to continue. She explained that she was being seen by a doctor and had experienced repeated hospitalizations. She told him she had suffered migraine headaches and found it hard to focus in class. School staff informed her that there was nothing they could do and that she should perhaps try to enroll again the following semester. Marta dropped out and did not return. She continued to suffer debilitating headaches and eventually found herself hospitalized yet again.

Marta heard about the online high school from her cousin. She was unsure it would work for her. She worried about being in front of a computer too long each day. She met with school staff who explained that she had until the age of 21 to complete her high school education through the program. She enrolled in four classes and was advised to do as much work as possible.

Marta says she works six hours some days, but there are days she cannot get out of bed. She feels that the online high school is challenging, but she is happy to have the opportunity to complete her work. She expressed gratitude for the online program and the encouragement received from her teachers. She is in constant contact with her advisor to make school staff aware of days when she in unable to complete her class work due to headaches. Marta, together with her advisor, is working on one class at a time rather than the traditional seven. She said this works better for her because she can focus on one class and achieve that credit before moving to the next. Marta feels virtual high school has provided educational opportunities from which she would otherwise have been unable to benefit. She appreciates being able to stay home to care for her daughter while pursuing her schoolwork.

Conclusion

Although the experiences of each participant were different and the challenges faced by each individual varied, end results were similar. Through narrative inquiries, the researcher was able to conduct qualitative research that accomplishes more than telling the participants' stories. By examining their individual challenges, greatest influences and their individual circumstances, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of "the unique culture of an out of school migrant youth" (Trahar, 2009). Results obtained through questionnaires, interviews and stories related by each participant are useful to traditional and virtual high schools. A deeper

understanding of the challenges faced by these seven participants will assist traditional and virtual schools in developing programs to better meet the educational needs of other migrant students, helping to prevent them from becoming Out of School Youth and guiding them toward becoming successful high school graduates.

Educators can use the stories of these students to assist future migrant and OSY. Not only can school personnel relate and connect with the stories of the participants in this research study, but they can also see the options available to assist migrant students in finishing their education. Educational options do exist and opportunities are available but only if those who are serving this population are aware. It is the goal of the researcher to educate those who are working with this population so they can guide migrant and OSY students in making informed choices when deciding how to achieve their own educational goals.

Chapter V

Findings and Discoveries

Introduction

Migrant students are leaving U.S. schools at a rate higher than any other subgroup (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Qualitative research is needed to get an in-depth look into the lives of Out of School Youth so educational personnel can better understand them and develop programs to meet their educational needs. With an increase in types of schools and learning environments, students and educational providers have more choices than ever before, but will they provide viable options for OSY? In this qualitative research study, the following questions were investigated:

1. What were the educational experiences of OSY participants?
2. How did credit accrual for the OSY attending online school differ from that in a traditional setting?
3. What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY in traditional and virtual settings?

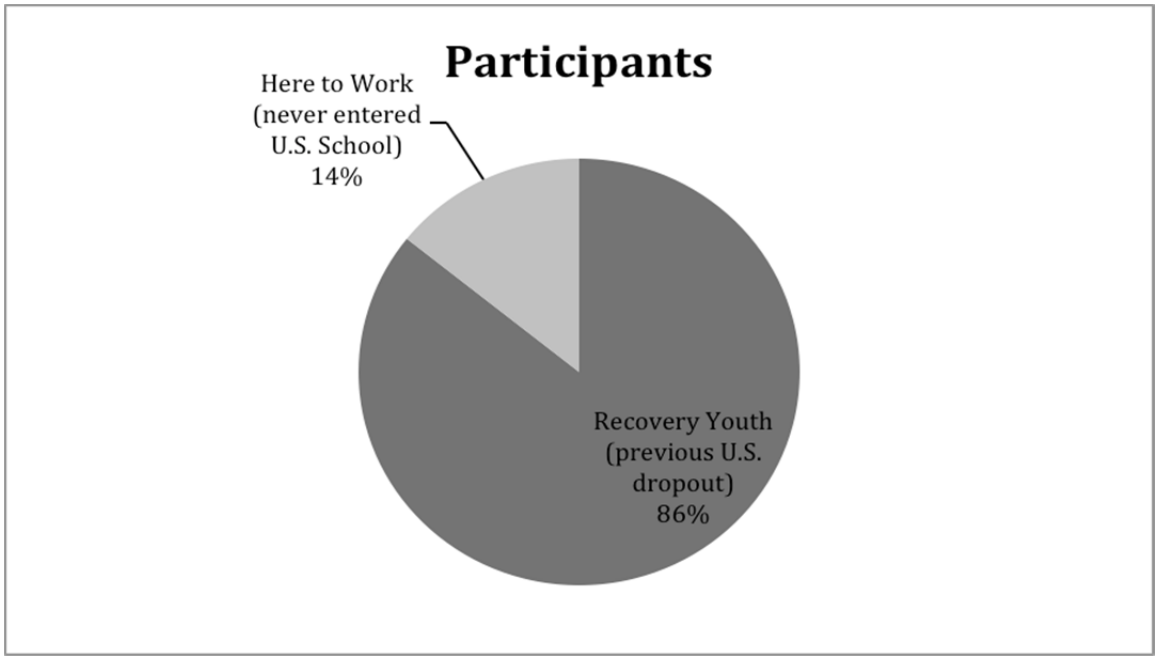
Chapter V summarizes the findings and discoveries that emerged during the interviews of the seven OSY participants. Each research question will be highlighted in this chapter with the conclusion focusing on a comprehensive summary.

Research Question #1

Although substantial research has been conducted to determine the challenges of OSY and the overall dropout rate in high schools in the United States, very little has focused on solutions. To find solutions for OSY, their challenges must be identified. To obtain this insight, the interview involved questions that focused on past experiences. The researcher evaluated each interview to identify emerging themes. Figure 1 depicts the classification of participants who qualified as OSY. This information is significant to note because the majority of the participants interviewed would be considered Recovery Youth. They were enrolled, attended, and had experience in the U.S. education system before enrolling in the online high school. The experiences of these participants included previous enrollment in a traditional educational setting making 86% of the participants qualify as United States high school dropouts. OSY qualifying as Here to Work would have different experiences because the educational requirements for other countries differ drastically. It is not uncommon for Here to Work OSY to have minimal educational history. Some attend school in their home country for less than three or four years.

Figure 1

Out of School Youth Qualifications



When participants were asked about their educational experiences, all provided initial remarks indicating that they enjoyed school, but comments about the challenges they faced soon followed. Maria, the first participant interviewed, liked school but moved frequently; she reported moving eight times in the previous three years. She stated:

> I really liked attending school; it was a lot of fun, but we moved a lot. I always felt behind. I had to start over a lot and never seemed to get past what I already learned. I really got behind in math and never felt like I was able to catch back up, just always starting over.

Adrian was born in the United States and only experienced the U.S. educational system. He too enjoyed school but was constantly losing credits because of his family's movement between the U.S. and Mexico.

> School was always okay for me. That was never the problem. My problem was not even my grades. I would start school in August, but in November, my family would go back to Mexico until my dad was needed again in February. I was never able to finish my first classes and then was told I missed too many days for the second semester. I had lost my credits before I even started.

Lupe had different experiences, but shared views similar to the other participants. Lupe moved to the U.S. after completing what would be her ninth-grade school year in Mexico. She enrolled in a United States high school three months after arriving. She said she enjoyed it and did well.

> I loved school in the United States. I was able to learn my English and did all of my classes. At the end of the third year, I was a senior, and I thought I would graduate, but they told me I had enough credits but not in the right classes. I would have to take more, but they never told me this until the end. I was very sad, so I left.

Each participant in this study had a different story, but all shared one common emerging theme: they had all enjoyed school. Each participant experienced challenges common to migrant students, but in spite of the problems they encountered, all liked attending school.

All participants agreed that education was important, and each participant also noted that their parents also believed education was important. Each participant viewed education as his or her way out of his or her current situation, and all had dreams of achieving something that involved further education. Figure 2 gives visual representation to the ongoing difficulties experienced by these OSY while they were in the U.S. education system. Table #8 gives the frequency that these challenges occurred within the group.

The fact that each of these participants had faced significant adversities yet still desired to continue their education speaks to the resiliency of each participant. The concept of resiliency

refers to an ability to carry on or overcome hurdles (Sandidge, 2013). The seven OSY participants in this study had faced physiological, emotional, and academic hurdles. However, through it all, they retained the desire to continue on. The seven participants all identified challenges, but they did not let the challenges stop them from reaching their goals.

Figure 2

Academic Hurdles for OSY

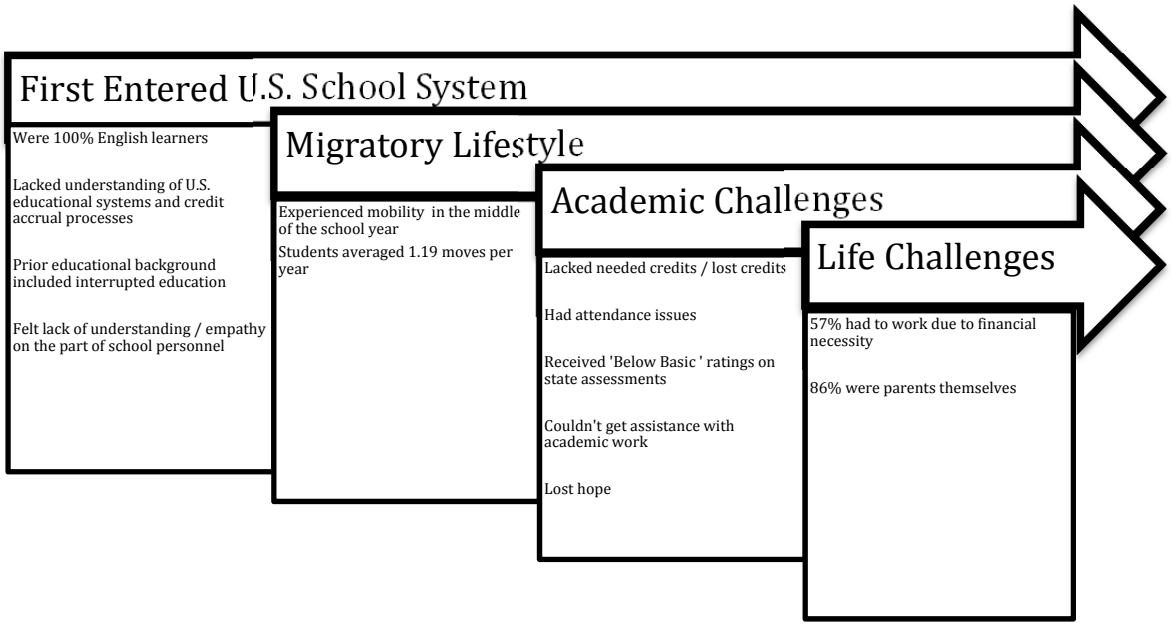


Table 7

Frequency of Challenges

Challenge	**Number of participants experiencing the challenge in this study**
English learner	7
Lack of understanding of the U.S. educational system / credit accrual process	7
Lack of understanding from school personnel	6
Interrupted education	5
Mid-school-year mobility	5
Loss of credits	6
Attendance issues	6
Below “Basic” on state assessments	4
Academic challenges	4
Loss of hope	6
Financial challenges	4
Parental obligations	6

While all participants related positive experiences in the educational systems they attended, each participant had educational needs that remained unmet, resulting in the decision to leave school. Resiliency was one common theme that continued to emerge as the interviews progressed. Regardless of challenges and setbacks, each participant continued to move forward with his or her education. When offered the opportunity to participate in high school classes that would allow them to continue to provide for their families, they took advantage of the

opportunities. These individuals, faced with discouraging struggles, continued to consider education as the means of escape from their situations and the key to a better future. Adrian, reflecting on his educational experiences and those of his parents, was best able to articulate the value he and all the participants placed on education.

> I have seen my parents struggle. I have seen them work so hard bent over and hurting, always without complaint. I think they maybe went to third grade. They were never given the opportunities I have, and so I do what I do because of them. I do not want them to struggle and I want them to see their sacrifices pay off. This is my job—to go to school.

Research Question #2

How did credit accrual by the Out of School Youth attending online school differ from that in a traditional setting? Although graduation requirements can change from state to state and even school to school, one thing that is a constant is the need for students to accrue credits. The number of credits may change and the courses needed may change, but in the end, students must meet the diploma-granting entity's requirements. The varied requirements from district to district present a challenge all migrant students face. When students move from district to district or state to state, they repeatedly discover that their previous work has been wasted when classes don't align. They lose credits when previously completed classes do not transfer or are not required and, of course, they lose credit because of absences.

All research participants in this study, migrant students who had previous dropped out of a U.S. high school or those who never entered a U.S. high school, were enrolled in online high school courses. Table 8 displays the credit accrual averages for students who participated in this study. The first column shows their average credits accrued during an average semester in their brick and mortar environment, and the second column displays the average credits per semester

accrued while at the online high school. All of the information for this table was gathered through reviewing students' educational transcripts.

Table 8

Credit Accrual Comparison

Participant	**Traditional U.S. high school credit accrual (average per semester)**	**Online U.S. high school credit accrual (average per semester)**
Maria	3.5	5
Adrian	5.5	6.7
Jose	5.2	7
Lupe	5.2	8
Rosa	NA	7
Esperanza	2.1	6.8
Marta	4.0	5.9

All participants achieved increased credit accrual in the online high school. When asked about their experiences, all spoke to the flexibility it provided. Esperanza, the mother of two young children, expressed it as follows:

> I would have never been able to finish school because I had to care for my children. In the online high school, I can work on my classes whenever I have time. Sometimes I work in the mornings or evenings, but sometimes I have to work on the weekends; I can do it whenever.

The online high school was effective for others because it helped overcome the challenges of frequent moves. Maria's family would move whenever her father found work. During spring semester 2011, he found work in Utah. The family moved with him to Utah for

seven to ten days, then returned to Idaho. Maria would have lost credit due to absences in a traditional school, but the online school enabled her to maintain her classes without being penalized. If she missed a day, she knew she had to make it up. She related:

> We move a lot. With the work my dad is currently doing, we go back and forth between two farms. We spend most of our time in Idaho, but go to Utah for a week or two here and there. With the online high school, I bring my computer with me and am able to keep doing my work. If I have questions on my work I can email, text, or instant message my teacher and I get help. I don't get behind and I am getting my credits.

Each participant had a different challenge; however, the flexibility provided by the online high school enabled students to overcome barriers to course completion.

Although the participants in the online high school achieved increased credit accrual, some of the negative aspects persisted. For example, 43% of the participants expressed difficulty staying on task. Jose, a participant who graduated from the online high school during the 2011-2012 school year, expressed this challenge:

> It was very easy to get distracted with other work that needed to be done. Sometimes when I would get home from work, I would be really tired and wouldn't want to do my (class)work. I would have to make myself do it or know that I would have to do it on Sunday, which was my only day off.

Rosa, a mother, also struggled with finding time to do her schoolwork:

> I couldn't have gone to (traditional) school because I have a son. I sometimes struggled with making my schoolwork a priority. As a mom, I always have stuff to do, so I had to make sure I set aside time to do my work.

Prioritizing schoolwork can be a struggle for students in any setting, but it poses a particular challenge in the online world. Without constant face-to-face interaction, students find it easier to put off completing their assignments and at times, shut down altogether.

A second struggle emerging from this research study involved the students' desire to interact with their peers and teachers. Online high school offered various social events such as prom, clubs, and other activities, but participants in this study did not take part in these activities. Of the seven participants, 29% found they missed the social interaction provided in a traditional setting. Lupe was one of the participants who expressed this concern:

> I miss talking with people. I can interact with my peers at work and church so it wasn't necessarily my friends that I missed, but the teachers. I felt that I missed out on the daily interactions and connections I made. It was also easier to get help because my teachers were always there.

The third obstacle that became apparent regarded the issue of language. All of these participants, at one time or another, were considered English learners. Of the seven participants, 57% were being served through the English Learner program. These students expressed appreciation for the online high school because it enabled them to reread the material, use a dictionary, and have auditory options on lessons. They indicated that their ability to read and write English improved during their enrollment in the online high school. They did, however, feel that progress in the ability to speak English was somewhat slower than they had hoped. The three students who participated in the ESL course said it was meaningful, but they would like to have advanced more in the area of spoken English. Rosa, one of the ESL participants who had spent the least amount of time in the United States, expressed this most strongly:

> My English has really improved. I really like the way all of the courses have helped me improve my reading. In English, I work on my writing and am feeling better. I do wish I could work more on my speaking. The ESL program has some things to improve my speaking, but it is not the same as being able to talk with someone who speaks English. I don't know how I could do this on the computer, and since I can't go to regular school, this is better.

In spite of the challenges identified by the seven students involved in this research study, the students successfully completed credits. Participants averaged 6.3 credits per semester at the online high school compared with 4.38 in their traditional settings.

Research Question #3

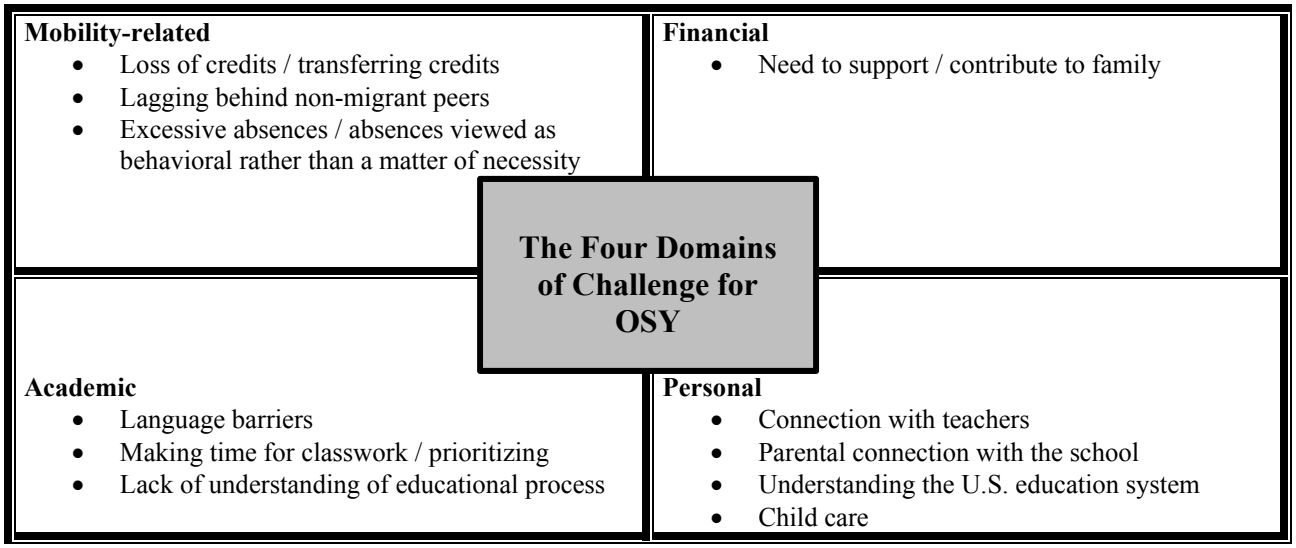
What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by Out of School Youth in the traditional and online virtual settings?

The purpose of the third and final research question was to gather information that would be of value to schools meeting the needs of OSY. Many schools in the United States educate migrant students. The researcher hopes that information gathered from this final study question will provide schools with information needed to establish or improve programs to better meet the needs of these students and ultimately, influence the graduation rate of this population.

Study participants discussed challenges faced. The researcher was able to categorize these challenges into four major life areas. These areas include: mobility-related, financial, academic, and personal. Figure 3 gives visual representation to these four domains and the challenges that were most frequently were expressed by the participants.

Figure 3

Four Domains of Challenge for OSY



All of the students who took part in this study expressed mobility as a major challenge. Participants detailed their moves from place to place and expressed disappointment about transcripts being lost, credits being denied, and the many other difficulties that arise from frequent moves. Esperanza dropped out of high school during the second semester of her 11th-grade year. She expressed her frustrations as follows:

> My family had just moved back to Arizona after being in Mexico for two months. We moved back to the same area we always did, but this time when I went to enroll, the school told me they had no record of me ever attending. I know I had received credits, but they were telling me they didn't have anything. They then told me that because I was 17, I would need to get a GED because I wouldn't be able to finish before turning 18. I was so angry because I had been there before. I left with my mom and didn't go back.

Esperanza's story was similar to the others'. Maria was the participant who had moved the most frequently in the past three years. She recalled eight moves during the past three years, describing it thusly:

> When I was in South Carolina, they gave me classes to take, and then we moved to Arizona and they told me they were on the trimester and so I couldn't start until the new trimester began. I finally was able to start, when two weeks later we moved to Utah. I attended school whenever they let me, but I went the whole year without getting one credit. That was while I was in middle school so it was ok, but the same thing happened when I started high school. I struggle with math; it is hard. I am always behind.

With all of the participants indicating mobility as a challenge they face, finding a solution to support them in this area would be pivotal for any educational entity. When the participants were asked how schools could remedy this situation, they offered many possible solutions. Table 9 lists recurring suggestions that were presented.

Table 9

Suggested Solutions to Mobility

Suggested Solutions	Rationale	Frequency of the suggestion
Online course work	Flexibility is offered through online courses.	7
Credits based on work completed instead of on attendance	This would remove the low-attendance penalty.	5
Test out options	Students would receive a credit if they could pass a comprehensive course exam.	5
Shortened reporting periods	Students could complete 3 or 4 classes a quarter instead of 7 or 8 classes a semester.	5

The second domain deals with obstacles participants faced in the area of finances. Fifty-seven percent of the students expressed the need to work for money as their primary concern. Participants could offer no suggestions for solutions in this domain. They discussed the need to provide basic necessities for their families including food, shelter, and clothing. Family members living in both the United States and in their home countries depended on help for these things. The participants felt that it was their primary responsibility to assist in providing these basic needs. Not one participant had any solutions, but Jose did offer insight into juggling school and work:

> Sometimes my shift would be during the day, and sometime my shifts would be at night. I would come home and sleep. When I woke up, I could do my schoolwork. It took me a lot longer and I wouldn't do as much schoolwork, but they let me do what I could when I could. I was 21 years old when I finally graduated. It took me a long time, but I did it because I could do my classes when I could.

Although no solutions were offered, the researcher found Jose's statement to be of value. The OSY population needs an education that can transition with their needs. Flexibility is critical. Educational providers, online and brick and mortar, need to be able to provide these students with the flexibility needed to work for pay and complete schoolwork.

The third domain focuses on the personal or family needs expressed by OSY. This domain reflects some variances, but students primarily expressed the need for good relationships between students and teachers as well as the need for a better understanding of the U.S. educational system. There were additional suggestions for the participants who were mothers. These related to the need for services such as childcare to increase the ability of these young moms to study and still be able to care for their child(ren).

When asked why they dropped out, participants gave varied answers, ranging from difficulty complying with attendance requirements to meeting opposition from school personnel and administration. When asked if there was anything that could help them stay in school, they gave similar answers. Seventy-one percent of the participants expressed a desire to stay in school because of a connection they had with one or more of their teachers. These OSY expressed an overwhelming desire for social interaction, which was lost in the online high school. Marta, one of the participants who dropped out of high school because of health issues, felt most influenced by her science teacher. She explained:

> I liked to go to school because of my science teacher. I didn't like science very much, but my science teacher would help me with other stuff. I would meet her before school to get help on my Math and English. She would talk with me about anything I wanted to talk about. I showed her my grades. She talked with the counselor for me when I had my headaches.

Lupe also expressed a connection with one of her teachers. She explained:

> When I moved to Idaho, my ESL teacher helped me with everything. She showed me how to open my locker. She would call my parents and my parents would call her. I didn't know how to go to my classes. She showed me everything. I liked school because of her; she was a very good teacher.

The importance of connecting with a teacher while in school continued to emerge in each interview. Students expressed a need to feel connected and supported by adults in their schools. A strong recurring theme was that of student-teacher relationships. Without teacher support, the students felt as if no one cared. With it, they felt motivated and vested in their school and education. The participants said this connection was present in the online high school, but all expressed a desire to have it strengthened. They felt more interaction was important and would help them stay on track.

Another topic that emerged in domain three was the need for these students to have information for their parents. The U.S. educational system was new to these participants. Maria rated its importance highly, as follows:

> When I would come home from school, I would ask my parents about something that my teachers would tell me. They wouldn't know what I was talking about and would tell me to ask my teacher. Sometimes I was too embarrassed to ask my teacher, so I just pretended to know what she was talking about.

Further support to parents and students is a necessity in helping these individuals understand the U.S. school system. Table 10 is a list of suggestions to help families in this area.

Table 10

Suggested Family Supports

Suggestions	Frequency
Flexible course work	7
Childcare	6
Training about U.S. educational system	7
School-level, adult contact or mentor for students	4
School contact or mentor for parents (increase understanding of educational process)	3

The fourth and final domain focused on the academic challenges faced by OSY. Three of the seven participants moved to the United States during their high school years. This posed an additional academic challenge because the students needed to understand English in order to pass core academic requirements such as Biology, Algebra, and U.S. History, but language classes did not always count toward graduation. Lupe dropped out of high school after being told she had enough credits, but not in the right areas:

> I did all of the classes they told me take. I was taking about three ESL classes per semester not knowing these were not helping me graduate. I didn't know that they weren't giving me classes I needed like Government, Economics, and Biology. I didn't find out until the fourth quarter of my senior year.

Lupe continued by expressing frustration at not being able to take the classes she needed. However, she also commented on her level of ability to speak English and how grateful she was for it.

Another area of concern that emerged from domain 4 focused on the students' ability to prioritize school. The many outside influences experienced by these students caused a drop in the perceived importance of schoolwork. Eight-six percent of the participants rated school as less important than caring for their children and working to provide for their families. These students found it difficult to place a high priority on school.

One challenge that fell into domain 4 was also identified in domain 3. This centers on the need for a better understanding of the U.S. educational system for both the family (domain 3) and the individual (domain 4). Three of seven participants were living at home and received support from their parents. The other four participants lived and worked independently without parental support. Duplication of this sub-area illustrates the importance to parents and students of understating the U.S. educational system.

Suggestions offered to better support OSY for challenges in domain 4 are listed in Table 11. The primary focus of the supports listed in Table 11 is a better understanding of the U.S. educational system, academic flexibility, and additional support for students who are learning English, especially those who learning English while earning the necessary credits to graduate high school.

Table 11

Suggested Academic Supports

Participants' academic suggestions	Frequency of suggestions
Training on the U.S. educational system	7
Bilingual course work (especially for high school students who need core content courses for graduation)	6
Academic tutoring	6
Academic language support	4

Conclusion

In this qualitative research study, the following questions were investigated:

1. What were the educational experiences of the Out of School Youth participants?
2. How did credit accrual by the OSY who attending the online school differ from that in a traditional setting?
3. What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY in both the traditional and virtual settings?

Chapter V outlined the recurring challenges and suggested solutions presented by the seven participants in this study. All information in this chapter was gathered directly from the participants. All participants in this research study met the definition of migrant students and were considered OSY before enrollment in the online high school. An English interpreter was used for three of the seven participants. In addition, translation was used for three transcriptions and quotes.

The purpose of this chapter was to outline recurring struggles and possible suggestions for overcoming these challenges. Further discussion as to how school administrators can learn from these themes and suggestions occurs in Chapter VI. Throughout all interviews, it was evident that the participants had, and continue to have, a strong desire to learn. However, they can continue their education only in a flexible educational environment that allows them to do what is needed to provide for their families. An example of a sample program is outlined in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Introduction

Especially for Here to Work youth, a migratory lifestyle is seen as a way out of poverty for Out of School Youth. However in the United States, there is a direct relationship between educational attainment and socioeconomic status (Aber, Morris, & Raver, 2012). With the key to ending poverty being placed in education, it is vital that schools provide effective educational options for migrant students. To truly meet the educational needs of Out of School Youth, educators must stop focusing on the students' challenges and instead start looking for solutions. They must find alternative and creative methods to meet the various educational needs of these students who are dropping out of school at a rate substantially higher than their peers. The research questions investigated in this qualitative case study were:

1. What were the educational experiences of the Out of School Youth participants?
2. How did credit accrual for the OSY who attend the online school differ from that in a traditional setting?
3. What academic and familial supports are needed to overcome the challenges faced by OSY in both the traditional and virtual settings?

This final chapter will cover the findings of this research study including whether online classes effective in meeting the educational challenges faced by OSY. In addition, it will present the supports needed in order for OSY to be successful in completing their education in both

virtual and traditional settings. Suggestions on how schools can develop educational programs that best meet the needs of OSY will also be addressed.

Summary of Results

In Chapter II, the literature highlighted seven hurdles identified by the Office of Migrant Education that affect migrant students. These seven areas of concern are as follows:

1) Educational Continuity
2) Instructional Time
3) School Engagement
4) English Language Development
5) Education Support in the Home
6) Health
7) Access to Services (Migrant Education Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit, 2012, p. 5)

The challenges identified by the seven participants aligned with the seven areas of concern. The challenges faced by Out of School Youth were categorized into four quadrants and focused heavily on educational continuity and instructional time along with English language development, school engagement, and education support in home.

In 2007, Escort suggested the following seven effective strategies in working with migrant students:

1) Constant monitoring of credit accrual towards graduation
2) Alternative educational programs such as basic education
3) English language instruction
4) Enrichment opportunities: extended school days, summer camps, etc.

5) GED programs

6) Work experience programs: applicable job skills that earn students credits

7) A variety of support services: academic and language tutoring, health services, and other services that help meet basic needs. (2007)

The seven suggestions from Escort also were confirmed by the participants' suggestions on how schools could better support them to meet their educational needs. Participant suggestions can be found in Tables 10-12.

In Chapter V, three themes emerged from the research conducted through two semi-structured interviews conducted with seven participants. In addition to these themes, several challenges emerged that must be overcome in order for OSY to be successful in school. The researcher placed all reoccurring themes into four domains. The four domains along with the challenges for each category can be seen in Figure 3. The four domains include: (1) mobility, (2) financial, (3) personal, and (4) academic. Within these domains fall the more specific challenges of each participant.

The answers to research question number one that emerged from the interviews revealed that the educational experiences of the participants were positive. All but one of the participants had been enrolled in a U.S. public school and had attended for a minimum of one year. The students enjoyed the opportunities and experiences they received while in a traditional school. One-hundred percent of the participants expressed positive feelings towards their traditional educational experiences, but all had to leave due to reasons identified in one or more of the four domains. All participants expressed a variety of challenges, but the challenge most recurring was the challenge of feeling frustrated and disappointed by a person or action from their traditional education setting. The overall feeling that came out of the interviews was that the participants

had been punished for things out of their control and although they had hopes of finishing school, they would not be able to. Students felt they were left with no other choice than to leave school.

The data collected during the interview in regards to question 2 also reflected very positive participant feelings. One-hundred percent of participants expressed an immense amount of gratitude towards the opportunity they received in the online high school. Although this environment also posed a new set of challenges, for these participants, the online high school allowed them to fulfill their priority obligations (work, family, financial, etc.) all while earning credits. The flexibility provided by the online high school helped these students to finish school or get much closer to finishing.

All participants expressed the need to have structure and help staying on track from a teacher or adult mentor at the online high school. Additional suggestions were given by the participants to further enhance the education experience. These suggestions can be found in Table 12 in Chapter V and include the following: (1) Bilingual courses, (2) Academic tutoring, (3) Training for students and families on the U.S. educational system, and (4) Academic language support.

The answer to the research question number three centered around what the participants needed to overcome the common challenges faced by OSY. Figure 2 lists the challenges categorized into four major life domains. The solutions proposed to overcome these challenges are then listed in Tables 10,11, and 12. The suggestions given by the participants focused on supports the participants needed in order to be more successful. Although the online high school had successful results, the suggestions provided by the participants would be applicable and appropriate for any educational environment serving the migrant population.

Conclusions

Out of School Youth participants who took part in this study enjoyed school and did not want to leave school. However, due to their situations, they felt as though they had no other choice. When given the opportunity, the students were interested and willing to participate in an online high school where they were able to receive their credits in a very flexible environment. The success rate of credit accrual in this environment was positive, and on average, students earned 2.183 more credits per semester than they did in their traditional environments. Finally, the participants identified their challenges and then offered suggestions to educational institutions.

An educational institution can set up programs that better meet the needs of this population, thus having a positive effect on both the OSY and the school's overall graduation rate. The suggestions offered through the recurring themes that emerged and the suggestions offered by the participants will assist school personnel in evaluating what they are doing and what they might change. By combining the suggestions offered from the participants and the flexibility provided through the use of technology, schools will be able to impact change and offer programs that better meet the needs of their students and eliminate the very definition of Out of School Youth.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research specifically focusing on the graduation rates and solutions for overcoming the challenges faced by Out of School Youth is needed. Research for this population exists and thoroughly identifies its challenges and lifestyles. Continued research suggestions include the following:

- Gather data on the graduation rates of migrant youth to better project the actual graduation rate of this mobile population.
- Collect data to offer insight into where migrant students are who never complete their high school education, where migrant students are who do finish their high school education, and what post-secondary options and supports are needed for migrant students who do graduate from high school.
- Conduct Here to Work v. Recovery Youth comparison studies – how do their needs differ?
- Measure attrition rates for OSY and migrant youth participating in online schools.
- Measure post-secondary education rates for migrant youth
- Measure OSY and migrant youth post-secondary education rates before and after deferred action.
- Research whether documentation status can affect children's stress levels and impact education.

Implications for Professional Practice

With the graduation rates of both Hispanic and migrant youth remaining unchanged for decades, it is evident that change within schools must occur. The results of this research offers potentially valuable suggestions for how to achieve positive changes in the way education is provided. With technology offering more and more options, educators are able to think outside the box. No longer are schools confined to the walls of buildings or the 8-3 time frame. Options exist and schools are able to provide a high quality education with the flexibility needed by the individual. For schools with large migrant populations, this study provides suggestions for

setting up programs that allow these students to stay in school while meeting their familial, financial, and other challenges. Characteristics of such programs include the following:

- Flexibility in attendance policies (allowing students to make up days, continue to work while absent, and/or test out of units/courses)
- Flexibility in the way students earn credits (online courses, testing out, bilingual options, etc.)
- Alternative educational platforms (online units/courses and independent study units/courses)
- Adult mentors that connect with students weekly (email, phone, home visits, etc.)
- Bilingual courses (particularly important for students who immigrate to the U.S. during their secondary years and have had previous education in their native language)
- Training for families and students on the educational process, expectations, and requirements for the U.S. school system

By providing alternative options for these students, schools will be able to retain enrollments and will increase their graduation rates. Migrant students need additional supports and the flexibility to complete their work when they can. This is not to say they do not need structure, but instead they need a program that is individualized and takes into consideration the challenges they face that for the most part, are out of their control. The education of this population must be a collaborative effort that includes the students, their families, and educational mentors within the schools. Collectively they will be able to develop individualized programs that offer the students the flexibility needed but even more importantly, hope.

To assist educational entities in supporting OSY, the researcher has included the following list of resources. These resources range in both cost and time commitments but are offered to give educators an idea of what would be needed.

- Policy changes – A low cost way of offering OSY flexibility in the way they both access and complete work involves changing policies. District policies that restrict the student to a location or a set way of doing things would need to be modified to include variance for OSY. Typical policies include but are not limited to the following: attendance, seat time, end of course exams, and any policy that could add additional credit requirements on top of the state minimum.
- Flexibility in course work – This solution has a wide range of options that can look very different because of the variety offered through technology. Inexpensive solutions that offer students flexibility include the following: teacher-prepared independent studies that do not require direct instruction, testing-out options for students to show their competency in a course or unit, and online courses and purchased correspondence course work from providers such as the National PASS (Portable Assistance Study Sequence) Center. PASS provides inexpensive courses that can be completed as an entire course or a specifically missed unit. PASS is free for participating states but is an inexpensive option even for non-members ("National PASS Center," n.d.).
- Alternative education platforms – These platforms (not to be confused with alternative schools) are alternative ways of accessing education. One example is the use of an online Learning Management System (LMS) where teachers develop courses that can be accessed online. Teachers outline course expectations and objectives, and include a pacing guide. Students complete these courses to satisfy the course requirements but can

do them from anywhere at any time. The systems range in price, but regardless of which platform is used, training for both the instructor and the student is needed. Free LMSs, such as Schoology offer everything needed to get started. More in-depth programs such as Blackboard exist, but do have a cost. Once an LMS is secured, online curriculum can then be added. Some free online curriculum can be found, but it does require time to locate and add to the LMS. Some examples of free online curriculum are USA Learns and Khan Academy. Purchased online curriculum is also available and is much less time intense; however, prices range from $5.00 per license to $500 per license. Examples of purchased curriculum include the following: Compass, NovaNet, ALEKS, and Grad Point. Additional costs that are typically associated with the LMS format include technology devices and Internet access. Devices that can be used to access platforms vary. Devices range in price but could include chrome books (priced around $200 each), tablets (ranging from $200 - $500), and laptops ($450 and up). Assistance programs such as Computers for Kids offer devices to families for a minimal cost, but they are not available in all areas and may not contain the necessary speed needed to run the programs. Internet access is another necessary component. Internet access is free in many urban areas such as public libraries, coffee houses, and restaurants. Providing Internet access for students and/or families is a possibility, and options depend upon what is available in your location.

- Adult mentors – Providing a student with an adult mentor is something that is fairly easy to do. Many schools already pair students with homeroom or advisory teachers, so this component is often nothing new. An additional way schools can support their OSY and families is through the use of a direct line cell phone. Cell phones can help family

members feel comfortable knowing they are calling directly to someone who speaks their same language. An example of this type of cell phone use involves dispersing business cards containing a specific cell phone number that students or family members can call and know they are going to reach someone at the school who speaks their native language. Users do not have to worry about the challenge of trying to communicate in a language in which they are not familiar. A school staff member that speaks the desired language carries the phone. In the case of this study, it would be Spanish.

- Bilingual courses – Bilingual courses exist in correspondence and online formats. The PASS Center offers correspondence courses in Spanish for select courses. Online Science and Math courses offered in English and Spanish can be found in ALEKS. Grad Point and Florida Virtual Courses also have some courses in Spanish.
- Education regarding the U.S. school system – This can be done in a variety of ways, including evening and weekend meetings that are held at times that are convenient to the families. Meetings that are set around family work schedules make them more accessible. Providing food (i.e. dinner at an evening meeting) is also a great way to encourage families to attend these parent meetings. Parent meetings should have a clear and concise agenda. For many, time is valuable, so if a one-hour meeting is scheduled, keep the meeting to one hour so parents feel that their time is respected. Topics for parent meetings can include the following: understanding secondary credits, graduation requirements, state assessments, college entrance assessments, post-secondary options, and a variety of other topics that focus on helping parents understand the U.S. education system so they in turn can become more involved in their students' education.

Sample Education Plan

I. School Schedule

   a. Days – Flexibility in school days. Students have the ability to choose which days they participate in school. Days could include both weekdays and weekends. The number of courses in which the student is enrolled determines the number of days recommended.

   b. Time – Extended time and flexibility. Students are given the opportunity to set a schedule that meets their needs.

II. Curriculum

   a. Test-out option – Students have the option of testing out of units and/or courses by completing comprehensive unit or course exams.

   b. Language options – Courses are available to students in the language of their preference.

   c. Readability levels – Flexibility in the readability level exists to support secondary students with lower readability rates.

   d. Monitoring – Progress monitoring ensures that courses are extending student learning.

   e. Life skills courses – Practical & life skill courses are available as follows:

      i. School to work and vocational courses – students receive elective credit for time spent working.

      ii. Life skill courses – i.e. Botany courses focus on agricultural skills.

      iii. Parenting classes are available for elective credit.

      iv. Elective courses teach U.S. culture.

III. Teachers

a. Trainings occur for teachers on the needs of Out of School Youth.

b. Teacher mentors are available for all OSY.

c. A point of contact is established for parents.

IV. Educational & Family Supports

a. Access to language supports is available.

b. Academic tutoring is available in the language of preference.

c. A designated phone line (cell phone) is established to be operated by Spanish-speaking school staff and accessed by students or parents.

d. Training is available on the U.S. education system.

e. Time management training is available.

f. Childcare is provided by the school for families and students.

V. Governance

a. Attendance – Student attendance is based on work completion instead of actual seat time or time spent.

b. Extensions – Students have a set amount of time (i.e. semester) to finish course work, at which time they receive credits, apply for an extension that would carry work they have done over to the next reporting period, or take a zero for courses below 60%.

c. Choice of format – Students would be given a choice in how they access their education. Choices include the following: brick and mortar, online, independent study, and/or hybrid, or blended. The most success will come from education that can be modified to fit the needs of each student as needed.

d. Communication – A mentor is be assigned to each student. Communication between the student and mentor must occur weekly. Communication between the mentor and the student's parents must occur two times a month.
e. Supplemental programs – Extended education or supplemental programs are provided to students to increase their performance on state achievement tests. Alternative routes for state testing allow students to prove academic competencies.
f. Accommodations – Students can receive academic accommodations that assist them in their course work. Accommodations do not change the rigor of the course.

By structuring an educational program that offers flexibility, support, and ongoing communication and mentorship, OSY would have a chance to overcome their most common challenges and continue their education. The participants in this study shed light on their experiences and offered valuable suggestions on how schools can better meet their needs. Educational institutions can use the information the participants provided to structure a program that offers them what they need while benefiting the school by allowing this typically disengaged population a chance to successfully finish high school.

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Appendix A

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Kelsey Williams** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 10/24/2011

Certification Number: 792796

Appendix B

Online High School Letter of Support

May 31, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is notice that Online High School Board of Directors gives our approval for Kelsey LeDuc-Williams to conduct her Doctoral Research at [redacted] School. The scope of her research has been reviewed by the board and we are satisfied that this research could be beneficial for our school and other schools that serve migrant students.

Sincerely,

Signature of Board Chair

Board of Directors

Appendix C

NORTHWEST NAZARENE
UNIVERSITY

July 20, 2012

Kelsey LeDuc-Williams
[redacted]

Dear Kelsey:

This letter is to inform you that your project entitled "A Mixed Method Study Exploring Educational Solutions for Out of School Youth (OSY)" has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee. Your reference number is 11062012.

The required forms have been signed and a full copy is being retained in the Human Research Review Committee files.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephen C Mountjoy, Ph.D.
Chair, HRRC
(208)467-8436
scmountjoy@nnu.edu

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form – Adult Student

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Kelsey LeDuc-Williams, M. Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to overcoming the barriers faced by Out of School Youth. With this study, we hope to improve the educational experience and academic success of this unique population. We appreciate your involvement in helping us investigate how to better serve and meet the needs of Migrant Out of School Youth both in the traditional and online environment.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you a) you have met the definition of Migrant, b) you have met the definition of Out of School Youth, and c) you have participated in online courses at [redacted]

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You or your parent/guardian for participants under the age of 18yrs old, will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. Participants under the age of 18, will be asked to sign an Assent Form.
3. You will meet with Kelsey Williams, primary researcher, for two interviews either face to face or via the Internet with audio/webcam technology.
4. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about your experiences with online education, traditional education, and the supports you feel were provided or were needed in order to have a successful educational experience. This interview will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.

5. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed at a location mutually decided upon by the participant and the primary researcher and will take a total time of about 80 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federal-wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to your from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better meet the needs of Out of School Youth.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Kelsey LeDuc-Williams can be contacted via email at [redacted], via

telephone at [redacted] or by writing: [redacted]

or you are free to contact the bilingual paraprofessional at [redacted]. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Paula Kellerer, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at [redacted], via telephone at [redacted], or by writing: [redacted]

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not you participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status in your online school.

I give my consent to participate/for my son or daughter in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form – Minor Student

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Kelsey LeDuc-Williams, M. Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to overcoming the barriers faced by Out of School Youth. With this study, we hope to improve the educational experience and academic success of this unique population. We appreciate your involvement in helping us investigate how to better serve and meet the needs of Migrant Out of School Youth both in the traditional and online environment.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you a) you have met the definition of Migrant, b) you have met the definition of Out of School Youth, and c) you have participated in online courses at [redacted]

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You or your parent/guardian for participants under the age of 18yrs old, will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. Participants under the age of 18, will be asked to sign an Assent Form.
3. You will meet with Kelsey Williams, primary researcher, for two interviews either face to face or via the Internet with audio/webcam technology.
4. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about your experiences with online education, traditional education, and the supports you feel were provided or were needed in order to have a successful educational experience. This interview will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.

5. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed at a location mutually decided upon by the participant and the primary researcher and will take a total time of about 80 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to your from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better meet the needs of Out of School Youth.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Kelsey LeDuc-Williams can be contacted via email at [redacted], via

telephone at [redacted] or by writing: [redacted]

or you are free to contact the bilingual paraprofessional at [redacted]. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Paula Kellerer, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at [redacted], via telephone at [redacted], or by writing: [redacted]

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not you participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status in your online school.

I give my consent for my minor student to participate in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian **Date**

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix F

Assent For Minor Participants

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Kelsey LeDuc-Williams, a student at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to overcoming the barriers faced by Out of School Youth. With this study, we hope to improve education for all migrant students We thank you for being willing to help us and other migrant students.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you a) you have met the definition of Migrant, b) you have met the definition of Out of School Youth, and c) you have participated in online courses at [redacted]

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You or your parent/guardian for participants under the age of 18yrs old, will be asked to sign Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. Participants under the age of 18, will be asked to sign an additional Form telling me that you agree to participate.
3. You will meet with Kelsey Williams, primary researcher, for two interviews either face to face or via the Internet with audio/webcam technology.
4. You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences with online education, face-to-face education, and the supports you feel were provided or were needed in order to be successful in school. This interview will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.

5. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study to make sure I heard you correctly.

These procedures will be completed at a location we decided upon and will take about 80 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to skip any question or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to your from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better meet the needs of other migrant students.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Kelsey LeDuc-Williams can be contacted via email at [redacted], via telephone at [redacted] or by writing: [redacted] or you are free to contact the bilingual paraprofessional at [redacted]. If for some reason you do

not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Paula Kellerer, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at [redacted], via telephone at [redacted], or by writing: [redacted]

G. ASSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not you participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status in your online school.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix G

OSY Interview; Part 1

1. Would you prefer English of Spanish?

DEMOGRAPHICS

2. Are you male or female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. Ethnicity: Please check one

- ☐ Mexican American
- ☐ Mexican

Other (please specify)

4. Country of Birth?

5. Primary Language?

6. Years in the United States?

- ☐ Born in the United States
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 5+ years

7. Please list all locations you have lived in the last 3 years and the time you spent in each location to the best of your ability.

8. Which category below includes your age?

- ☐ 15 or younger
- ☐ 16-18
- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22 or older

9. What is the last grade you completed in school?

10. Where did you complete the last grade attended?

- ☐ United States
- ☐ Mexico
- ☐ Central America

Other (please specify)

11. I qualify as an Out of School Youth because I am:

- ☐ Here to Work (never entered a U.S. School and moved to the U.S. with the primary focus of obtaining work)
- ☐ Recovery Youth (dropped out of the U.S. School System)

12. Highest level of Education of your father?

- ☐ Grade School
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ Some High School
- ☐ High School Graduate or equivalent
- ☐ Technical School
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ Four Year Degree
- ☐ Graduate Degree or higher

13. Country received?

14. Highest level of Education of your mother?

- Grade School
- Middle School
- Some High School
- High School Graduate or equivalent
- Technical School
- Some College
- Four Year Degree
- Graduate Degree or higher

15. Country received?

16. Reason for leaving school or never enrolling in school?

- Lacking credits
- Needed to work
- Missed State Assessments

Other (please specify)

17. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- Not employed, Not looking for work
- Not employed, looking for work
- Employed part time, 1-20hrs per week
- Employed full time, 32-40hrs per week
- Employed full time, more than 40hrs per week
- Disabled, not able to work

18. Are you single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated

19. Do you have any children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, skip to question #21

20. How many children do you have?

- ☐ One on the way
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5+

HISTORICAL/CURRENT EDUCATION

21. I believe Education is important?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Why?

22. I believe Education is important for me?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Why or Why Not?

23. My parents feel education is important?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Why or Why Not?

23. Tell me about your school experience?

24. Tell me about the challenges you have faced while attending school?

OSY Interview; Part 2

1. Tell me about your educational experiences
2. What made you want to drop out of school?
3. What supports did your school offer that supported your learning?
4. What supports did you wish your school had offered to better support your learning?
5. What makes/made you want to participate in an online high school?
6. What advantages do you have by attending online high school? Disadvantages?
7. What advantages did/do you have by attending a traditional High School? Disadvantages?
8. What factors have most contributed to your success in traditional/online school?
9. What are some of the factors that caused you to leave Online/Traditional High School?
10. What were some of the barriers to you being successful at Online High School/Traditional High School?
11. What were some of the barriers to you being successful in a Traditional High School?
12. Tell me about the remainder of your educational experience---are you enrolled somewhere else, did you finish high school, and what are you doing now?

<u>DAY/FUTURE</u>

13. Tell me about your typical day?
14. How many hours a day do you have available for school?
15. What are your goals, dreams, hopes for your future?
16. What advice would you (or have you) given to others who are thinking about doing traditional/online courses?
17. What advice would you give to educators who are trying to help you finish school?

18. If you had it to do again, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?

Appendix H

Telephone Recruiting Script

Hello! My name is _____ (bilingual paraprofessional) and I am calling on behalf of Kelsey Williams who is a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. She is conducting research on Migrant Out of School Youth to determine what supports are needed for this unique population to be successful in both the traditional and online setting. Part of her research includes interviewing students who meet the definition of migrant, out of school youth, and who participated in online courses at [redacted]. I am contacting you today because *you or your son/daughter* was/is identified as migrant, Out of School Youth, and participated in online courses at [redacted]. Would you be willing to consider *being a part/allowing your son/daughter to be a part* of her doctoral study? We would like to do some interviews with students who had or have met the definition of migrant, out of school youth, and who have participated in online courses through [redacted]. We would like to meet *you/you and your student* for one interview to determine what is needed to overcome the barriers faced by this unique population. We would like to find out about what *you/your student* need to be successful in both traditional and online education.

If yes,

Verify contact information

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Do you have questions for me? We will contact you soon to schedule interview at which time we will have a form for you to sign.

If no,

I thank you for your time and would like to leave you my contact information in case you change your mind. I can be reached at, [redacted].

Thank you again for your time.

Goodbye

Appendix I

Participant Debrief

Thank you for your participation in this study.

After we have an opportunity to analyze the data, we will email you the results and ask for feedback. Mainly we want to ensure that we captured the essence of our discussion, accurately portraying our discussion and your thoughts. This study will conclude by March 31, 2013.

Questions

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, Kelsey LeDuc-Williams can be contacted via email at kbwilliams@nnu.edu , via telephone at [redacted], or by writing: Kelsey Williams, [redacted].

Thank you for your participation!

Kelsey LeDuc-Williams

Doctoral Student

Northwest Nazarene University

HRRC Application# TBA