

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATION BY THE FAMILIES OF  
MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKER CHILDREN AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

By

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Statement of the Problem

Little is known about migrant parents' perceptions of how to best involve migrant students and their parents in a high school program that successfully addresses their needs. The proposed study will identify the perceptions and needs of migrant parents regarding their children's high school education in El Centro, California. Research efforts will consist of a case study of Central Union High School District (CUHSD), El Centro, Imperial County, California. According to the CUHSD, district enrollment is approximately 3,678; approximately 81% are Hispanic (Central Union High School District, 2002).

## Research Design

The research method was a case study of the needs and roles of migrant families and their perceived relationship with Central Union High School. The chosen method of data collection was face-to-face interviews using an interview guide sheet developed by the author. It consisted of seven open-ended questions designed to elicit the participants' response on their child's education. Participants were recruited from the school district's enrollment records. A total of 50 subjects were contacted by mail, telephone, and in person to ensure that as many individuals as possible were aware of the study. Individuals who met the criteria were assigned a number corresponding to the order in which they responded, and interviews were scheduled. A total of 30 interviews were completed. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. The transcripts of interviews were analyzed using content analysis, and the results were used to develop a composite depiction of migrant parents' needs, role conceptions regarding education, and perceived relationship with the school district.

Participants' responses showed that many respondents were primarily involved in their children's education by interacting with their children and teachers. Respondents expressed a widely held desire to participate more by attending meetings, volunteering, and having increased communication. Respondents uniformly viewed their children's education as a means to achieving a better life. They held a positive view of teachers, citing patience, accessibility, and helpfulness as factors in their relationship. However, problems communicating because of language were often cited as a limiting factor. Further, respondents showed a keen interest in receiving information and support to increase their participation in their children's education.