Is there an exit from the labyrinth of "horizontal" low-wage jobs for farmworkers?

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Introduction – Scope of the Problem:

Nearly one third of the immigrant farmworkers in Washington State work in agriculture for more than 10 years without being able to get an improvement in their employment positions and earnings[1]. Achieving higher occupational status, earnings, responsibilities, and job satisfaction is referred to as developing career trajectories[2]. Despite the fact that farmwork is one of the hardest works in the United States, according to the Department of Labor the average farmworker earns between $2,500 and $5,000 annually, with 75% earning less than $10,000 per year[3]. The monthly housing cost for farmworkers is nearly half of their monthly income (Fig. 11)[4]. Together with Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, and Oregon, 20% of the housing units for farmworkers in Washington State are substandard (Fig. 8)[5]. Despite this fact, Washington, that is part of the Western Stream, is among the states with higher year-round percentage of 54.5% of farmworkers. Seasonal farmworkers are forced to live in poor housing quality and 44 % of them travel with their families (Table 7) [6].

[1] Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust

[2] Jaeger, David A, Ann Huff Stevens. "Is Job Stability in the United States Falling?" in *On the Job* ed. David Neumark (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 33-38.
[3] No Refuge from the Fields, p. 5
[4] No Refuge from the Fields, p. 10
[5] No Reguge from the Fields, p. 24
[6] No Refuge from the Fields p. 5

TABLE 7

Units with Missing or Broken Appliances

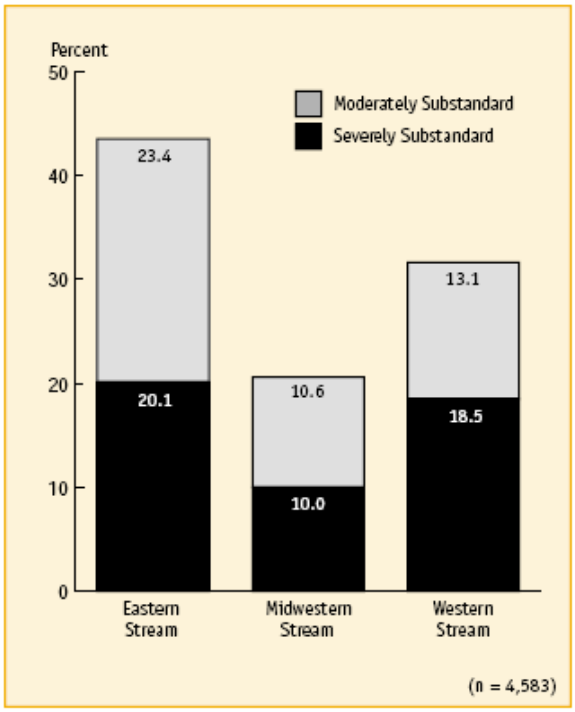
Appliance Working Appliance	*Percent Lacking*
Stove	10.6
Refrigerator	5.7
Bath/Shower	8.3
Toilet	9.4
Laundry Machine	51.6
Telephone	42.8
Lacking Stove, Fridge, Tub and/or Toilet	21.7

(n = 4,625)

[7]

FIGURE 8

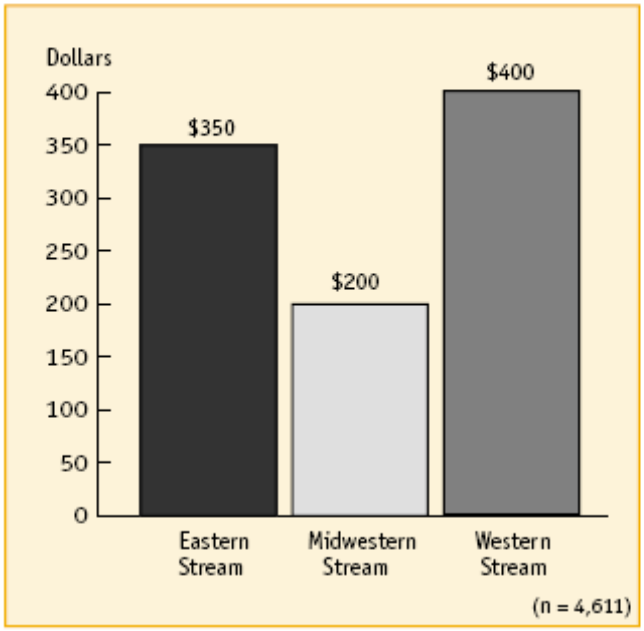
Substandard Units by Migrant Stream



[8]

[7] No Refuge from the Fields, p. 26
[8] No Refuge from the Fields, p. 31

FIGURE 11
Median Unit Cost by Migrant Stream



[9]

[9] No Refuge from the Fields, p. 34

Figure 13
Farm Labor Workers Employed
Pacific Region, California, and United States, 2006 to 2008
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/FarmLabo//2000s/2008/FarmLabo-02-15-2008.txt and related sites.

	Pacific Region Washington and Oregon	Number of Workers[1] California	United States except Alaska
2006			
January	52,000	125,000	614,000
April	65,000	137,000	720,000
July	92,000	191,000	876,000
October	85,000	186,000	800,000
Average Last Three Quarters	81,000	171,000	799,000
2007			
January	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
April	63,000	176,000	736,000
July	92,000	188,000	843,000
October	75,000	188,000	817,000
Average Last Three Quarters	77,000	184,000	799,000
2008			
January	42,000	132,000	594,000
April	68,000	156,000	700,000
July	110,000	160,000	828,000
October	90,000	173,000	801,000
Average Last Three Quarters	89,000	163,000	776,000

Notes: n.a. = The January 2007 *Farm Labor Survey* was not conducted.
[1]All hired farm workers include supervisor/manager and other workers which are not published separately. This survey has two components: 1) A target population of all farms with a value of sales of $1,000 or more per year (1,700 sample points); and, for agricultural services, 2) all operations that provide agricultural services to farmers (600 sample points). See *Guide to the Sample Survey and Census Programs of NASS*.

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Figure 13 above shows that nearly half of the farmworkers in Washington State are seasonal, having the biggest numbers during the harvest season from July to October. In the years after 2005 there has been a strong economic expansion in Washington State and a tendency by the growers to make the agricultural labor market more permanent. Agricultural producers have had an expected fear from long-run labor shortage considering the fact that a big percentage of farmworkers tend to leave agriculture, finding jobs in other sectors in order to secure a year-long income. Figure 19 below shows that production agriculture provides the biggest number of monthly jobs and the lowest monthly earnings. Not only easier to find jobs, but production agriculture registers the highest average percent change of 15.2% in earnings from 2007 to 2008[11]. The constant flow of immigrants from Mexico provides a constant labor force for the

[10] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington, p. 15
[11] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington, p. 15

agricultural sector and there are always newcomers to occupy the lower positions in the agricultural labor force[12].

Figure 19
Total Employers, Total Jobs, Annual Total and Average Earnings, by Industry
Washington State, 2007 Compared to 2005 and 2006 in Current Dollars
Source: Labor Market and Economic Analysis, Employment Security Department. Quarterly Census of Employme and Wages (QCEW), Compared to 2005 and 2006 in Current Dollars

Industry	2007 Average Number of Firms	2007 Annual Total Earnings (Industry Sector Wage Bill)	2007 Average Monthly Jobs	2007 Average Annual Earnings Per Job	2006 Average Annual Earnings Per Job	Percent Change in 2007 Earnings Compared to 2006	Perc Char in 20 Earni Compa 200
Production Agriculture	**6,168**	**$1,416,967,271**	**69,542**	**$20,376**	**$19,264**	**5.8%**	**15.2**
Poultry and Egg Production	45	$27,223,902	900	$30,249	$29,637	2.1%	3.7
Animal Aquaculture[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Cattle Ranching and Farming	698	$112,545,640	4,314	$26,088	$26,015	0.3%	8.4
Other Crop Farming	781	$130,656,500	5,462	$23,921	$22,243	7.5%	14.5
Support Activities for Crop Production	259	$292,009,679	12,488	$23,383	$22,522	3.8%	16.3
Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture	341	$107,164,994	4,847	$22,110	$21,151	4.5%	9.0
Other Animal Production	146	$10,069,502	458	$21,986	$20,862	5.4%	7.4
Vegetable and Melon Farming	353	$113,367,158	4,347	$26,079	$23,002	13.4%	26.5
Support Activities for Animal Production	168	$12,698,543	577	$22,008	$20,228	8.8%	10.9
Oilseed and Grain Farming	1,055	$35,886,439	1,731	$20,732	$18,952	9.4%	12.1
Hog and Pig Farming[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Fruit and Tree Nut Farming	2,252	$556,844,914	33,708	$16,520	$15,434	7.0%	11.5
Other Industries[2]	70	$18,500,000	710	$26,056	$25,354	2.8%	4.4
Value Added Agriculture Manufacturing	**1,318**	**$1,529,970,254**	**38,004**	**$40,258**	**$38,748**	**3.9%**	**9.7**
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	101	$363,979,962	6,487	$56,109	$54,121	3.7%	9.1
Dairy Product Manufacturing[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Grain and Oilseed Milling[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Beverage Manufacturing	229	$157,704,478	3,886	$40,583	$40,420	0.4%	-0.3
Animal Food Manufacturing	45	$26,930,780	678	$39,721	$38,542	3.1%	5.8
Other Food Manufacturing	177	$156,219,286	4,287	$36,440	$34,608	5.3%	1.1
Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty	78	$368,001,745	10,252	$35,896	$35,427	1.3%	6.3
Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Animal Slaughtering and Processing	68	$127,837,888	3,583	$35,679	$33,482	6.6%	16.5
Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing[1]	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Other Industries[2]	374	$248,800,700	7,220	$34,460	$33,130	4.0%	7.3

Notes: [1]* = Not published due to confidentiality. Totals are folded into "Other Industries." [2]For a comparison of calendar year 2006 with calendar year 2005 see: W ington, State of, Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis, *2007 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State*, June 2008.

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The following report investigates the common career trajectories for immigrant farmworkers, especially Latinos, and examines the reasons for their current work paths. The research seeks and summarizes the reasons that make agriculture a field principally attractive to Latino farmworkers, especially to recently immigrated Mexicans. The report seeks the answer to the following question: *Is there an exit from the labyrinth of "horizontal" low-wage jobs for farmworkers?* More specifically, it pursues the answers to these questions: *Why do farmworkers encounter difficulties keeping their employment and moving up the ladder in the agricultural industry, and what difficulties do they have*

[12] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington, p. 13.
[13] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State, p. 22

in this regard?, What are the reasons that make agriculture a field principally attractive to Latino farmworkers?, and *Why do farmworkers quit their farm jobs in agriculture and seek jobs in other industries? And when they do this, what other occupations do they seek out, and why?* I am going to investigate how the lack of English and professional trainings hinder upward mobility within the agriculture industry for farmworkers. The majority of immigrant farmworkers from Mexican origin face either one of the following two options for their career destiny: they are either doomed to work in the low-wage sphere of agriculture during all of their active labor years, or, if they have some English language skills, they seek other low-wage jobs in industries like construction or public services, seeing this as a successful step for leaving the agriculture industry. This report seeks to explain why this is so. In addition, since the relationship between housing and job stability is crucial, this research seeks to explain how job stability and career mobility depend on and promise housing stability as well.

This report's primary research findings depend primarily on interviews that were conducted with farmworkers living either in the two Farm Labor Housing developments in the community I studied or in self-owned homes. I also conducted interviews with farm owners, social service providers, union leaders, second generation Mexican-Americans, and a teacher in the elementary school with a bilingual Spanish-English program. My community partner for this research is Rosalinda Mendoza from the Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust. The Trust's main objective is to "bring new resources to meet the need for decent and affordable housing for farmworkers in Washington State." Rosalinda Mendoza provided directions during the process of conducting the research, as well as contacts of people that are closely related to farmworker issues.

First, I examine the structural features of migrant farm work with the multiple variables that constitute it, especially its seasonal nature, workers' reliance on informal networks to get jobs, and the housing issues it involves. Then, I introduce the concept of temporary and part-time jobs, in contrast to stable, full-time jobs. Next, I discuss the most important variable for job stability: human capital. On its own, human capital refers to a set of variables that increase the qualifications of a person such as education and training, language ability, and other traits that affect a worker's productivity[14]. Differences in the human capital create the social-class stratification within immigrant communities[15]. I also examine different opportunities for enriching human capital. Finally, I examine different spheres outside of the agriculture industry, where Latino farm workers seek employment.

This report focuses specifically on the difficulties that farmworkers experience in keeping their jobs and in seeking better career opportunities in the farms they work at. The first problem is that the labor structure in agriculture itself provides very few options for upward mobility. Considering the quantity of workers that work in a farm, the number of supervisors (mayordomos), crew leaders and managers is relatively neglectful and hence such higher positions are extremely competitive. Even if there are options for upward job mobility in a farm, the opportunities are far less than the number of people

[14] Gonzales
[15] Pfeffer

that might be interested. Usually higher positions such as irrigation managers and crew leaders are given to people who have worked the longest number of years on the farm. A major factor that farmworkers identify as a restriction for better job positions is their lack of English fluency and the lack of time to attend ESL classes and to practice the foreign language. However, after conducting the primary research, I can draw the conclusion that fluency in English is not always necessarily required for all of the higher positions, so this cannot be the only factor involved

Another factor that inhibits upward mobility is the seasonal nature of agriculture work. This seasonal nature is either the cause of migration and thus housing instability or, in the case of home-ownership, a cause for job instability that causes farmworkers be vulnerable to unemployment during the winter season. The report recommends taking advantage of the winter season when farmworkers are either unemployed or working part-time jobs and try to popularize and make ESL programs more accessible. In addition to facilitating ESL programs, another recommendation is organizing professional workshops as well as informal meetings with people that can share their stories of successful upward mobility and experience on their successful career path. Having in mind the importance of networking in finding jobs in agriculture these informal workshops will provide another source of networking and open new doors for farmworkers.

Scholarly Literature Discussion:

The Nature of Seasonal Farmworking:

The nature of seasonal farmworking is a key factor in the career path trajectories that the agriculture industry provides for farmworkers. Farm work is often described as job, not a career[16]. Seasonal farmworkers average just 24 working weeks annually, meaning that during the winter season they are technically unemployed. Martin analyzes a survey that shows that 44% of the farmworkers are not migrant, meaning that they work within 75 miles from their housing. Another 39% are shuttle migrants that would travel between Mexico and the USA. Only the remaining 17% are follow-the-crop migrants who follow the ripening of the crops from south to north, leading from Mexico through southern Texas up to Michigan or through southern California up to the state of Washington.[17] Farmworkers average about 4.5 weeks of non-farm part time work, and 10 weeks of unemployment during the winter season[18]. Nearly 25% of the farmworkers are unemployed for the whole period between November and March[19]. Because of the seasonal character of farmwork, immigrants who wish to settle in rural communities must

[16] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers* by Philip L. Martin, p. 26.
[17] Sosnick, Stephen H. *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States*. Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, West, 1978, p. 6

[18] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 25
[19] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State, p. 27

secure year-round employment off the farm[20]. This job instability outside of the summer season may explain why more than half of the farmworkers intend to seek an exit from farm work and start jobs in other industries within 5 years[21].

There is a clear trend of having more and more undocumented immigrants in the farm industry, because most of the immigrants that become authorized in the U.S. tend to find non-farm jobs and move out of the agriculture industry. Farm workers serve as reserve labor supply for the non-farm economy and moving out from the lower-wage primary agriculture sector is often considered to a way of job development and a solution for increasing monthly earnings[22] . Seasonal farm-working is a "last resort for at least two-thirds of the workers involved" and at least half of these farmworkers would have accepted a year-round job if it were offered[23]. In most of the cases, Latino farmworkers immigrate in rural communities as farmworkers, finding employment through social networks that have their ties to family and community of origin[24].

***Networking in the Farm Industry*:**

The importance and accessibility of informal family-friend-based networking for finding low-wage jobs in the farm industry provides Hispanic immigrants with a set of drawbacks. First, the lack of a structured clearinghouse for farmers makes the process of finding jobs more facilitated, efficient and dynamic[25].

Currently, the process of finding a job involves a family member that facilitates the contact with farm labor contractors. These job intermediaries are usually ex-farmworkers who hire farmworkers to form crews[26]. "Well, to find jobs is not so hard around here. The crew leader is the one that provides jobs. You see, the crew leaders are the ones in charge of keeping order in the fields. Then one does not have to deal with the American, nor does the American tell you anything if you are doing something wrong. Or if you are looking for a job, you don't ask the American. You make arrangements with the crew leader. It's better if he is a Mexican. But with the American, we don't make any deals (male harvesting apples in New York, with family in Florida)"[27].The crew leaders have established social ties, a resource network.

These contractors are in charge of hiring and transporting the workers, scheduling work, making work assignments, and supervising their workers[28]. Contractors can be migratory, taking crews on journeys and using Labor Camp housing, or stationary, in which case, they just serve farm growers and farms within 75 miles[29]. In almost all of the

[20] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[21] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 23
[22] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 3
[23] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States*, p. 47
[24] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[25] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 10
[26] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 10
[27] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[28] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 95
[29] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 95

cases contractors are usually ex-farm workers themselves. It is not uncommon for contractors to exploit farmworkers. These intermediaries are the "bridge" between growers and farmworkers and profit from the difference between what farmers pay to have a job done and what the contractor pays the workers[30]. Contractors often charge in a range from 7 to 16% of the wage rate[31] The Federal Government has established the Farm Labor Contractor Regulation Act (FLCRA) that is meant to protect farm workers from unfair attitude on the contractor's part.[32] The FLCRA requires contractors to provide a clear contract with the terms of employment and housing that are provided in a language that is clear to the worker; to return valuables and pay promptly, explain deductions from the wage[33]. Most importantly, the FLCRA requires that all contractors are registered and have license. The act requires that farm growers verify the license of the contractors they work with[34].

New-coming immigrants from Mexico have restricted social capital and their employment status is attributed to a number of factors like the economic conditions at the time of arrival, the type of jobs available, the organization of the labor process, technological innovation, the size of the immigrant community, the strength of influence and commitment of social organizations serving the immigrant community, cultural background, and the receptivity of the community members[35]. Community organizations, federal-based social services and unions could meet the functions of a central clearinghouse that would serve as a state-wide regulator and network to facilitate the organization of the labor process[36].

***Farm Worker Unions**:*

An example is the attempt of The United Farm Workers, the biggest Farmworkers union, to ask that farmworkers have the same labor regulations rights as nonfarm workers[37]. Farmworkers were excluded from the National Labor Relations Act in the '30s, because it was assumed that most farmworkers were hired in family farms and that the labor laws meant to protect factory workers were not relevant to farmworkers[38]. The NLRA excludes "any individual employed as an agricultural laborer"[39]. In 1975 California farm workers were granted with the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), an extension of the NLRA, that gave four major rights to farmworkers: "Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to for, join or assist labor organizations to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or

[30] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 10
[31] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 95
[32] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 102
[33] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 103
[34] *Hired Hands: Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States,* p. 103
[35] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[36] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 24
[37] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 72
[38] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 91
[39] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 107

protection, and shall also have the right to refrain from any or all such activities" (ALRA Section 152)[40]. Ever since UFW has undertaken the function to raise a voice for higher wages and benefits for farmworkers[41]. Throughout the second half of the 20th century organized farm-workers, have always had an "upper hand" over unorganized farm-workers, precisely because independent farm-workers tend to exit the farm industry and seek "upward mobility" in other industries[42]. Therefore, the demands for higher wages, benefits, and promotions, tend to come from farm-workers who are members of a union. However, as farm unions expand, the tension between the workers and the owners grows. Unions, especially in earlier years, were often referred to as "agitators" with "radical agendas determined to transform the economy"[43]. Many farmworkers have little education, are not U.S. citizens, and are scattered across thousands of workplaces, making it hard to bring farmworkers together in an effective union to press demands on employers"[44] The role of unions is to monitor and proclaim improvement on employment standards, health insurance and retirement benefits, real wage growth, and representation at work[45].

Obstacles Preventing Migrant Farmworkers from Finding and Keeping Jobs:

Farmworkers from Mexican origin have to overcome a set of obstacles in order to achieve job stability and be able to find opportunities and meet expectations that would guarantee job mobility. Job Stability refers to the duration of jobs, and job security focuses on the decline in job duration caused by increased involuntary job loss[46]. The most significant obstacle is lack of human capital. Person's job type and wages are an outcome of the "human capital" variables that include education and training, language ability, and "other traits that enhance a worker's productivity"[47]. The lack of alternative employment opportunities could become chronic for the farmworkers currently doing seasonal farm work by hindering them from the possibility to achieve job and housing stability[48]. The main obstacles that migrant farm workers from foreign origin face in order to achieve job stability and to have opportunities for promotions are: the inability to speak English fluently, low educational levels, lack of housing for large families, and lack of job alternatives. "A good cherry picker does not necessarily make a good cherry harvester operator," said D. W. Sturt, Director of Michigan State University's Rural Manpower Center[49]. Table 2 below illustrates social and human capital and other selected individual characteristics by employment status of immigrant Latino former farmworkers.

In the lack of human capital, the role of social capital becomes crucial for Mexican immigrant farmworkers. Social capital has a big importance for the labor-

[40] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 93
[41] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 57
[42] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p.57
[43] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 59
[44] *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, & the Farm Workers*, p. 58
[45] *Working in America: A Blueprint for the New Labor Market*, p. 117
[46] Neumark, p. 11
[47] Gonzales, p. 112
[48] Sosnick, p. 64
[49] Sosnick, p. 119

market success of immigrants[50]. Immigrant farmworkers who can "use" the resources of their extended families have better chances to achieve economic well-being compared to other workers who are single or have smaller families[51].However, this social capital is often narrowed down because of the "ethno linguistic closure". In the lack of English-language skills, the social capital provides access to a "narrower range of low-income, low-prestigious jobs"[52]. Therefore, it is logical that narrow social capital limits employment mobility, because of the language barrier. This is what causes high levels of employment and job mobility among more skilled and educated immigrants[53]. Farmworkers face two significant issues that hinder them from job mobility: the limited labor-market opportunities of farmwork and the isolation due to lack of linguistic fluency. Social capital can either facilitate the gaining of access to economic resources or exclude those who are not part of the established network of social relations, limiting the access to opportunities outside that network[54]. In the case of immigrant farmworker's communities, social capital is both advantageous in certain relations, but as well limits others. Some argue that social capital lays the basis for obtaining better incomes for human-capital endowments that would help break the isolation and build career trajectories. Others argue that the social capital of immigrant networks limits the opportunities to enter in mainstream career trajectories[55].Nee and Sanders summarize that, "the presence of an ethnic economy shapes the choice-set for newly arrived immigrants by offering them an array of ethnically bounded opportunities in which ethnic labor markets provide mechanisms for transferring job skills to immigrant workers"[56].

Even though social capital is important to find work, it can eventually inhibit the ability of farmworkers to seek opportunities for developing career trajectories. Some farms provide on-farm housing that further isolates the immigrant farmworkers and makes it difficult for them to develop English-language skills, and thus keeps their career trajectories blocked in the low-wage level of agriculture[57]. Once again, the discussion ties with the importance of human capital, specifically English-language skills, in order to achieve integration. Table 2 below shows that self-employed immigrants have better human capital endowments such as: more years of education, English-speaking skills, and integration outside of the immigrant community. The human capital seems to play a

[50] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[51] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[52] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[53] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[54] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[55] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[56] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[57] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269

role in how immigrants find their jobs. Immigrants who have found jobs themselves, have better human capital endowments[58].

The main factor that determines immigrant's independence is the immigration status[59], however, English-language ability (human capital) is another important parameter for measuring how independent and self-reliant an immigrant is. The degree of self-reliance is proportional to the probability for finding better employment and getting higher income[60]. Homeownership is another outcome of self-reliance[61]. Usually immigrants tend to live with relatives for more than a decade, before they purchase their own home[62].The homeownership rate is lowest among first-generation householders (41.7%) and highest among the second and third generation (59.2%)[63].The Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) from 1989 has helped reduce discrimination against future Latino home buyers by requiring strict loan reporting standards[64]. There is a relation between homeowners and their will for higher education for their children, "We're trying to provide some kind of future for our son," said Armida Hernandez, a new homeowner[65].

According to the endowments of their human capital, workers can find jobs in either one of two types of labor-market: "blue-collar" and "white collar" jobs. The "blue collar" category refers to labor-intensive occupations and the "white collar" category refers to professional occupations that do not require manual labor, e.g. teacher or office clerk[66]. Mexican immigrants and first-generation Mexican-Americans tend to constitute greater percentage in the "blue-collar" category, and the second and third generations account for bigger percentages in the "white collar" jobs. This distribution is due to the fact that Mexican Americans of every generation have less education than the rest of the U.S. population[67]. First generation Mexican Americans have an average of 8.7 years of education, compared to 12.4 years for the third generation[68]. Mexican Americans are attaining more education at faster pace than the rest of the U.S. population[69]. Thus due to the increase in human capital, second and third generation Mexican Americans have better chances to find higher-wage jobs. "Upgrading" the human capital with education and skill training has always been the most effective ways of improving individual opportunity and competitiveness[70]. Employer-based trainings are principally directed to serve the goals of the employer institution, but they will contribute to the competitiveness

[58] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[59] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[60] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269
[61] Gonzales, 99
[62] Gonzales, 98
[63] Gonzales, 99
[64] Gonzales, 99
[65] Gonzales, 99
[66] Gonzales, 134
[67] Gonzales, 63
[68] Gonzales, 63
[69] Gonzales, 77
[70] Carnevale, Anthony. "Employment and Training." In An Economic Strategy for the '90s: Human Capital and America's Future. 239-267.

on the state and the national levels[71]. "We need to raise general awareness of the importance of human capital to our economic future. Workers are far more than a means of production and must be seen as a strategic resource and as stakeholders in any organization," said former secretary of labor Ann McLaughlin[72].

Table 2. Social and Human Capital and Other Selected Individual Characteristics by Employment Status of Immigrant Latino Former Farmworkers in Five New York Communities, 2003

Characteristic	Unemployed	Employed Part-Time	Employed Full-Time	Self-Employed	Chi-square/*F*
Close white friends in Community					
Has close friends (percent of *N*)	4.5	10.0	7.8	9.1	18.2* d.f. = 9
Visits friends' homes (percent of N)[a]	4.5	10.0	13.9	18.2	
Calls friends in emergency (percent of *N*)[b]	21.2	20.0	30.7	54.5	
No close friends (percent of *N*)	69.8	60.0	47.6	18.2	
Years of school completed (mean)	8.7	8.2	8.5	11.8	2.8* d.f. = 3
Ability to speak English					
A little (percent of *N*)	40.9	42.0	47.0	45.5	15.4
More or less (percent of *N*)	13.6	10.0	18.7	9.0	d.f. = 9
Well (percent of *N*)	22.7	12.0	12.7	27.3	
Not at all (percent of *N*)	22.8	36.0	21.6	18.2	
Immigration status					
Green card or work permit (percent of *N*)	31.8	42.0	40.4	27.3	22.3* d.f. = 12
Naturalized citizen (percent of *N*)	6.1	6.0	6.6	36.4	
No documentation (percent of *N*)	47.0	44.0	44.0	27.3	
Refused (percent of *N*)	15.1	8.0	9.0	9.0	
Male (percent of *N*)	65.2	66.0	54.8	54.5	2.9 d.f.=3
Mexican (percent of *N*)	72.7	80.0	75.3	53.5	3.2 d.f. = 3
Age (mean)	34.7	31.9	33.1	39.8	3.6** d.f. = 3
Years lived in U.S. community of residence (mean)	8.3	5.3	6.1	14.4	12.3*** d.f. = 3
N	66	50	166	11	–

[a] Has close white friends and visits white friends' homes.
[b] Has close white friends, visits white friends' homes, and calls on white friends in emergencies.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

73

[71] Carnevale
[72] Carnevale
[73] Pfeffer, Max J., Pilar A. Parra. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave." *Rural Sociology*. Cornell University, 2009. 241-269

The inevitable first job that immigrant workers from Mexico find is in the agriculture industry. Using the already established networks and the help of contractors (intermediaries), they find low-wage job positions as farmworkers that do not require any English-language skills. By using the pre-existing social capital, most Mexican immigrants manage to build a living in the new country. Nevertheless, exactly because of these pre-existing networks and the lack of the necessary human capital, Mexican farmworkers stay isolated, the majority never learn English, and have difficulties achieving job and housing stability. The first generation Mexican immigrants cannot find the perfect balance of social capital. On one hand, it helps them feel comfortable and provides them with networking to find jobs in the farm industry. On the other hand, the social capital can increase their isolation and hinder their adaptation outside of the immigrant community. In the second case, social capital becomes the reason for the lack of the necessary human capital that would secure job mobility and higher earnings. It seems to be hard to find the right way out of the isolation and the endless low-wage career trajectories these millions of first generation immigrant farmworkers have established.

Having examined and discussed the nation-wide context for Latino farm workers and their common career trajectories, I'll try to apply it to the local and specific setting of Walla Walla Valley. The primary research bellow will investigate the issues that were discussed in the Scholarly Literature Discussion: How has 'migrant' farm work transformed into a pattern where people stay settled in one place in terms of their housing residence, but still hop around among various low-wage jobs? What has been the dynamic in the relation between job stability and housing stability in the past years, and in what ways do housing issues either impede or promote upward job mobility? Are farm workers in the Walla Walla Valley unionized, and if so, what kinds of assistance in promoting job or career advancement do unions provide? How strongly, meanwhile, do growers in the Walla Walla area discourage workers from joining unions, and what attitudes toward unions in general do farm workers in the Valley have? How is the understanding of social capital helping understand the career trajectories of farmworkers in Walla Walla? Is there lack of English-language fluency and how is this exemplary of the insufficient human capital of farmworkers? In what regard are 2nd and 3rd generation Mexican immigrants luckier than their parents?

Research Method:

This report contains analysis of primary material that was obtained primarily through conducting interviews and creating interview transcripts. Five groups of people were approached for interviews. The first group involved professionals from services used by farmworkers, such as the manager of Walla Walla Farm Labor Housing and the program director of Children's Home Society that helped me build the correlation between social and human capital. The second set of interviews included meetings with farmworkers that currently work in farms and live in one of the two farm labor housing developments in Walla Walla and Milton Freewater. These interviews did not have a set

time and depended on the spontaneous response of the residents I met during my visits at the communities. The conversations with farmworkers were the most significant part of my primary research, providing first-person accounts on the issues the research is investiganting. The third group of people I aimed to interview were farm owners and/or a grower association such as the Washington Grower's League. There is just one interview that I succeeded in conducting with a representative from this set and it is with Roger Bairstow from Broetje Orchards. Having in mind that Broetje Orchards is an example of a farm that places high value on its workers, it was very beneficial to have this interview that gave me perspective on a possible owner-farmworker relation. The last set of interest for the research were 1st or 2nd generation Mexican-Americans, who have completed their education here in the USA and whose parents are/were working in the farm industry. Eliza Cerna, who is a teacher at Davis Elementary school, was a great source, being an example of a Mexican-American who has a "white-collar" position and who could tell me details about migrant farming that she remembers from her childhood. Interviewing representatives of these five groups helped answer the question posed by this report for the context of Walla Walla: *Is there an exit from the labyrinth of "horizontal" low-wage jobs for farmworkers?* More specifically, *Why do farmworkers encounter difficulties keeping their employment and moving up the ladder in the agricultural industry, and what difficulties do they have in this regard?, What are the reasons that make agriculture a field principally attractive to Latino farmworkers?,* and *Why do farmworkers quit their farm jobs in agriculture and seek jobs in other industries? And when they do this, what other occupations do they seek out, and why*

All 15 individuals that were interviewed in the process of this primary research voluntarily signed the Interview Consent Form or gave clear verbal consent agreeing to participate in the research process by answering the questions. All 15 are adults and agreed to be cited in the research report. There is no information that this report reveals that might put into risk any of the participants, two of them willingly signed the forms only with their first names, and therefore, this is how they are mentioned in the report. Some of the contacts were provided by the community partner, Rosalinda Mendoza. The majority, however, were contacted after a research of community services here in Walla Walla, and as well with the great help of Mariela Rosas, director of Children's Home Society, who provided a number of the contacts. Two of the interviews were conducted with conference telephone calls, and the rest were meetings in person. The interviews occurred at the end or shortly after the harvest season. The duration for the individual conversations was on average of 20 min and all of them were recorded and later transcribed. The conversations with Arturo Sepulveda and other workers, members of the UFW were conducted in the form of group interviews.

Migrating farmworkers and a tendency to settle:

The story of Eliza Cerna's family is perfect to begin the discussion of primary research, because it illustrates the **seasonal nature of farmwork**. Her parents met in the

'50s while picking tomatoes in Florida and got married within three weeks of their first meeting. "It's crazy now to think about it, but when you're a migrant you have no other choice. After they were done with the tomatoes, my father's family was going to go somewhere else. So they either got married, or they were never going to meet again," said Cerna. The hometowns of her and her four siblings show the route her parents took, following the crops. "**The oldest in Arizona, then Virginia, Oklahoma, I was born in Minnesota, and my sister in Washington. It's almost a full circle of the country**."[74] The states of birth of all her siblings are a clear example of how migrant farmworkers follow the harvest from south to north, and then back south.

Seasonal farmworking is present in Walla Walla. "There are definitely less positions this year, because many people came from California, Texas, from Georgia and the positions got even more competitive,"[75] Gonzales said. He also clarifies that most of the migrant farmworkers that have come from the South had difficulties finding jobs. However, the ones that came with a crew leader were able to get contracts[76].

Juan Cisnero, a typical migrant worker, has been following the crops and often has relied on co-workers to find him better paid or easier jobs. He clarified that in California there are a lot more contractors than here in Washington[77].

Patricio cannot remember for how many years he has been in the USA. He just finished the harvest for Davis Orchards and has no job for the winter. "I will have to look for another job – in meat-packing, pruning. If there's no work, I'll have to go back to Mexico, I have no other option, it is just impossible to stay here and pay the rent and food during the winter. Before, I would travel throughout the whole year. I knew some contractors and places to stay in California, but now I'm too old to work throughout the whole year. I can't work the beans any more with my knees"[78]. It is already the end of the harvest season, and Patricio is still looking for a job for the winter. Seasonal farmworking provides job and housing instability. Seasonal migrating causes a cyclic perception of time and Patricio cannot remember for how many years he has been working in the fields. Jesus Hernandez explains that there are not many options for work, and people are forced to move from town to town to find work for living[79]. He has found a job for the winter, in a nursery, and will try to keep it for as long as he can, even though his hour-wage was just lowered with 5 cents, because of the economic crisis[80]. Jesus' example shows that in the case when farmworkers have secured job, they prefer to keep it. He has been working as a common worker in the nursery for the past three years. "Before that I worked in Weston for about 20 years," Jesus said. Farmworkers migrate when they lose their jobs and have no other option for the season.

Eliza Cerna, not only a daughter of migrant farmworkers, but presently a teacher at a bilingual program at Davis Elementary, has noticed that recently more and more families settle here[81]. In the past two years, Cerna has had just one student leave, because his parents were migrating farmworkers. "For me the main reason is that there is

[74] Interview with Eliza Cerna
[75] Interview with Aurelio Gonzales
[76] Gonzales
[77] Interview with Juan Cisnero
[78] Interview with Patricio
[79] Interview with Jesus Hernandez
[80] Jesus Hernandez
[81] Eliza Cerna

not a lot of temporary housing available to migrant farmworkers. The Farm Labor Housing in Walla Walla is one of the few affordable options and that's why more migrant farmworkers stay for longer here. I think it has always been easier to settle instead of being a true migrant farmworker"[82]. Settling in a place provides persistent and accessible education to the children, and as well achieving housing stability would perpetuate job stability or at least year-long income.

"There are some options for jobs during the winter such as pruning, work in warehouses and nurseries around Walla Walla. The women who have documentation can work in hotels or as babysitters. Some of the men have masonry skills and a lot of experience in construction and this is a preferred option because it is better paid. Going back to Mexico is sometimes the only option, even though it entails going through the risks of coming back illegally. Some of the people are eligible for unemployment. The ones that don't find any work…probably they've saved money for the winter. But I know they're just barely making it," said Cerna[83].

Aurelio Gonzales was interviewed shortly after the end of the harvest in the apple orchard where he was working during the summer. He worked there from 31st August until 10th October. He has a secured winter season job in a nursery where he has been working since 1991[84]. He is planning to settle permanently in Walla Walla. Since1987 has been living in the Farm labor housing in Walla Walla and in the recent years has been saving money to buy a house. "Right now it's very hard to save for a house. I'm waiting for the prices to lower a bit"[85].

Farm Labor Housings in Walla Walla Valley:

I explore three of the farm labor housing options in the Walla Walla Valley. Two of them are the Farm Labor Housings in Walla Walla and Milton Freewater, and the third is the housing community built by Broetje Orchards, Vista Hermosa. In all three of them, there is a tendency towards more permanent style of housing. Contrary to the information in the investigated and discussed in the scholarly literature section, these farm labor housing facilities do not provide poor housing conditions. The prices are affordable, the monthly rent is $300, and they do show the issue of crowding. Each household, an average of 4 people has a bedroom and a living room[86].

Jody Lindquist, director of the Farm Labor Housing in Walla Walla, said there are currently 114 households living at the development and a waitlist of about 9-10 families at any time. The housing is exclusively for farmworkers. The head of the household has to earn a substantial amount of their income from farm labor. The US Department of Agriculture Rural Development helped fund the Farm Labor Housing and they insist that the residents of the community earn the majority of their income in farmwork. Some of the families have lived there for more than 10 years[87]. There has been a shift away from migration seasonal work, thus making the housing and the labor force more permanent.

[82] Eliza Cerna
[83] Eliza Cerna
[84] Aurelio Gonzales
[85] Aurelio Gonzales
[86] Jody Lindquist
[87] Jody Lindquist

In the past years there have been a couple of families that had been living in the Farm Labor Housing for about 16-18 years and finally bought their houses. "This means that they've been able to save up money while living here and move to home-ownership," said Lindquist[88].

. The Farm labor homes in Walla Walla run exclusively on the rents. The only subsidy they get is "the 1% mortgage loans" that they later have to pay. The Farm Labor Homes are not able to receive charitable donations, because they are "quasi-governmental"[89].There is a non-profit organization, Friends of the Walla Walla Farm Labor Home, that was originally started by one of the Housing Authority members to help facilitate donations and additional projects such as – setting extra lighting in the area, a new-playground project, refurbishing the soccer field, supporting the *escuelita*[90]. The space of the farm labor homes is kept friendly and comfortable for all its residents. They provide several social services for the children, investing in their **human capital** (bilingual program in the *escuelita*, maintenance of the sport facilities).

Currently the Farm Labor Homes in Walla Walla is encouraging the permanent character of the housing. If people are absent for more than 60 days, they are supposed to turn in the apartment before they go. Generally, the vacancy rate does not go considerably up during the winter. Around 10 families end up leaving for the winter. Recently, home-ownership is getting more popular and this is seen as the ultimate permanent housing option[91].

Most of the residents of the farm labor homes in Walla Walla achieve housing stability. According to Lindquist, most people that plan to buy a house in the region stay in the Farm Labor Homes around 9-10 years to save money. Usually the other people stay for at least 2 years. Word of mouth is the best advertisement for the Farm Labor Homes. Most of the people who live there are from the same general area in Michoacán, Mexico, and are members of each other's extended family[92].

The Farm Labor Housing is a subject of contradictory debate. Some people claim that it perpetuates the isolation of the community and the social capital there limits the integration of the residents in the world outside. Some people that live there have never walked down Main Street in Walla Walla[93]. "Now the environment in the Farm Labor Homes is better, but it is still too isolated and above all is a comfort zone for all the residents. Sometimes, however, it just doesn't work that way," said Phillis Pulfer, retired from BMAC. On one hand, its supporters claim that it is very affordable, provides comfortable Spanish-speaking atmosphere that feels somewhat like home to its adult residents. Most of them do not speak English, some do not know how to write and read in Spanish. Their children often take the role of translators for their parents[94]. "Now, that's one of the bad things about the isolation out here, is that they can't easily get to Garrison

[88] Jody Lindquist
[89] Jody Lindquist
[90] Jody Lindquist
[91] Jody Lindquist
[92] Jody Lindquist
[93] Phillis Pulfer
[94] Jody Lindquist

to get an English class," said Lindquist. However, there are ESL classes brought by the Walla Walla Community College five nights a week, in a truck outside the main office building. It is a number of women that regularly attend the classes and feel comfortable having them in the Farm Labor Homes[95]. A community that offers job stability and ground to improve the human capital of the immigrants, or a comfort zone where social capital meets the limits of the wire fence, the farm labor housings offer the most affordable housing options for farmworkers in the region.

Social Networking and Social Capital:

The social capital of the interviewed farmworkers consists in their social and economic integration in the immigrant communities where they live, relationships with crew leaders, family networks. Eliza's parents traveled with their relatives most of the time. There was always an uncle or a cousin who would recommend a farm and they would all go there. For more than seven years her parents were constantly migrating all over the country[96].

Aurelio Gonzales described that it is easier to find jobs once you have settled and know the conditions and options in the regions[97] Often owners of small private farms would come personally to look for workers in the bigger orchards[98]. He added that it would very hard for the farmworkers that have just migrated for the season to find jobs because they have less time, and don't know where and how to look for jobs. In the past years, he would go to the fields, look for the managers and owners, and present himself. Years ago he was working with a contractor, but has understood it is better to look for a job independently. Being **more self-reliant** than the majority of farmworkers, Aurelio Gonzales was one of the two interviewed farmworkers that have been offered higher positions[99].

Developing Career Trajectories:

Four of the five interviewed farmworkers that currently live in the farm labor housings agreed that there are options for promotions in the farms where they work.

In the nursery where Aurelio Gonzales works, there are enough opportunities for job advancement for the workers. "When I started working there they taught us the process of plant production, irrigation, everything. In a couple of years they offered me to become a Crew leader (mayordomo) of the irrigation section and now I'm Senior Crew Leader for the tractor drivers. There are opportunities for those that want to learn and are not afraid to use the technology. Because very often people are afraid to have the responsibility for it. In fact it's very safe and easy to learn. As a crew leader, I have the responsibility and have to know how to explain what I want from the people. The most important, however, is to know how to treat them with respect and keep the safety at the

[95] Jody Lindquist
[96] Eliza Cerna
[97] Aurelio Gonzales
[98] Aurelio Gonzales
[99] Aurelio Gonzales

work place"[100]. Aurelio Gonzales proves the relationship discussed in the scholarly literature review between self-reliance, job stability and independence. He is not only planning to settle in Walla Walla, but is following the mortgage tendencies. Being a senior crew tractor leader gives him more responsibilities, that other people are not ready to take, but as well 18-hour-long working days sometimes[101].

Jesus Hernandez on the other hand, does not share the same optimism as Gonzales. He confirms that there are options for promotions in the farms, but he does not know whom to address for more information[102]. He feels discouraged to seek higher positions, because he thinks his lack of English-language skills would be a drawback[103].

"For us, Mexicans, that we have to work all the time, we have no time left to study and improve our English. And when we have time, we just try to relax, so we never improve our English,"[104] Hernandez said.

"It's complicated to find better positions in the farms and companies because most of the better positions are already occupied by people with a lot of experience and knowledge,"[105] said Juan Cisnero who has been working in the apple fields for the past 25 years. He does not speak any English. Patricio regrets not learning English, "It's a pity that I don't speak English, especially that I've been here for so many years. But I come, and I go, and come and go, and couldn't learn it very well"[106]. Not learning English after 25 years of seasonal work in the USA is an example of the unstable and inconsistent character of migrant farmworking. Patricio added that he has never tried seeking a higher position.

Paradoxically, Miguel Campos, who is the youngest from the interviewed and who speaks English fluently, is the most skeptical regarding job promotions and opportunities. He explained that the higher positions in the farms are already taken by people with a lot of experience and respect[107]. He also added: "You have so many workers, and a mayordomo to every 40-50 of them. There's no chance for all of us to get higher positions. It is very competitive, and the salary doesn't change that much"[108]. After the end of the harvest in Davis Orchards, he will work for two months pruning the trees. Miguel has been living in the USA for 9 years and attended school for a little. He helps his parents with translating when they need it because they do not speak any English. He has no plans for seeking new job opportunities for the moment[109]

Examples of Upward Mobility:

In addition to Aurelio Gonzales who after working for 10 years in the nursery was offered the position of a Senior Crew Leader, Juan Esperza, a grapevine manager in a

[100] Aurelio Gonzales
[101] Aurelio Gonzales
[102] Jesus Hernandez
[103] Jesus Hernandez
[104] Jesus Hernandez
[105] Juan Cisnero
[106] Patricio
[107] Miguel Campos
[108] Miguel Campos
[109] Miguel Campos

Local Walla Walla Winery, proves that farmworkers can develop career trajectories. However, how much does it cost them?

Aurelio Gonzales sometimes has to work 18 hours per day, but he is proud of his promotion as a Senior Crew Leader and satisfied with the fact he can afford having a big truck[110].

Juan Esperza is a grapevine manager in a winery in Walla Walla. Juan started working for the winery in 1994 as a common worker and then worked at the Seneca cannery for 6 years. After an accident suffered by the manager, they called him from the winery and offered him the chance to become a manager. His father worked for the same winery until he retired and the owners knew Juan's family very well[111]. "People think being a manager is easy. But it's not. I have a lot of responsibility. Especially I have to do all the spraying and dealing with people." Juan had to learn everything about vineyards from scratch when he started working in the winery. "Let's say I didn't know which grapes were Merlot or Sauvignon Blanc…That was the hardest – learning everything. Even I didn't know…each field has a main line, the water mainline. And my dad didn't know, and my boss only told me, "Do this, do that," but he never showed me that this is the water for the field. I was breaking my head looking around, and told my dad, "Which is for this field?" And he didn't know anything because the last manager didn't show him, too, so I was having a hard time. And I asked one of them, the last manager, "Can you please help me do this?" and he never showed up. So I had to open all the main lines and I turned the power on, and after that I was turning one by one off." Learning things alone, Juan had an accident with the tractor, "I didn't have the right tractor, it broke down – my main tractor that I use and I decided to put the sprayer on a different tractor, but it was too small. And I was turning when the water moved the tractor around, and it turned me…I got lucky"[112]. Juan Esperza had obviously not offered a special training that would have facilitated his first encounters with the responsibilities of a grapevine manager. What is more, Juan is exposed to even more hazardous conditions, than a common worker at the winery. He has a health insurance, but all other full-time workers have it as well.

Being a manager has increased his occupancy, his responsibilities, has put him in more hazardous working conditions. Juan works 10 ½ hours per day, Monday through Sunday. He goes to work every single day between November and March. "Now we clean the fields…I take a vacation in the middle of December, I go to Mexico, California. That's the only good part. I take a couple weeks for vacation. And then stay home a month and a half till February"[113]. However, being the grapevine manager has provided Juan Esperza with **job stability**. Before starting his job in the winery, he had worked for 12 years with apples asparagus, and onions[114]. From 1984 Juan lived in the Seasonal Farm Labor Homes in Milton Freewater with his family. Right now he owns a house in Walla Walla. His **job stability** has provided him an opportunity to achieve **housing stability** as well. His brother and mother live across the street. As a manager he gets paid

[110] Aurelio Gonzales
[111] Juan Esperza
[112] Juan Esperza
[113] Juan Esperza
[114] Juan Esperza

$12.50, $3.5 more than when he was not. He has a 19-year-old son[115]. "Even if you had to work in this, this is not for you. You need to go to college," said Juan to his son Julian when he went to help with harvesting for a few days. "If you don't go to school, this is what you're going to be doing, like me. Because I didn't go to school." Because when I came from Mexico, I only went to 6th grade. I got out and worked…And I decided to leave the school, my mom, my dad, never told me to stay in school…""Yeah , sometimes I think about going back to school"[116]. Considering continuing his education proves an attempt to enrich his **human capital.** A step towards enriching his human capital is done by a worker who is **self-reliant.**

The farm that creates self-reliant workers – Broetje Orchards:

Broetje Orchards is an example of a farm that provides opportunities for it's workers to develop their self-reliance. Roger Bairstow explains that for the most part when hiring for higher positions they try to hire candidates from the workers[117]. There are different expectations that depend on the nature of the job. There are over 1200 employees that work for Broetje's year around. In the harvest season there are 2000 total. Broetje Orchards provides housing at the Vista Hermosa Farm housing community. There are about 140 different houses rented at affordable rents to their employees. About 250 year-round employees live in Vista Hermosa[118]. There are more units in Walla Walla and some more in Benton city. There is another community built by Broetje in Pasco that provides home-ownership opportunities for their employees. In addition, there is a seasonal housing facility that provides 108 beds for temporary employees. This year they had about 800 seasonal employees[119].

There are different hierarchies in terms of positions that people can follow. In the fields there are 30 different crews with crew leaders and there are foremen who supervise all crew leaders[120]. "We provide training and scholarships to the employees and their kids who want to go on to college or to the parents who want to go back to finish school," said Bairstow, "In terms of professional development training obviously, we provide trainings if somebody shows propensity and potential. Lets say if somebody working in the packing line wants to grow into the supervisor of the whole packing line. There is a specific training that they need to go through to be able to have that technical capacity. Our foremost biggest expectations are the passion and interest. The technical skills we can teach. Are you willing to be a leader, to set an example and can you handle your responsibilities well"[121]. Broetje Orchards provide an example of an employer that invests in the **training** of the workers in order to increase the **competitiveness** of his company. By skill trainings and educational programs, the farmworkers are given the

[115] Juan Esperza
[116] Juan Esperza
[117] Roger Bairstow
[118] Roger Bairstow
[119] Roger Bairstow
[120] Roger Bairstow
[121] Roger Bairstow

opportunity to improve their human capital and thus be able to break the labyrinth of social capital and integrate themselves in the non-immigrant community.

There is no specific requirement for English language knowledge for all the higher positions that Broetje Orchards offers[122]. Most of the jobs do not even need English skills, because more than 95% of the employees are Spanish speaking. Most of the time Spanish is more important than English because it facilitates communication with everybody. "Of course it depends on the nature of the position. If it is a position on the reception of the front desk, we would need somebody who speaks both languages," explained Bairstow. There are ESL classes accessible to all employees[123], for the children – there is a daycare service. Vista Hermosa provides higher than **standard living conditions**, making it attractive for the residents to stay longer. In general workers stay in Broetje Orchards for a longer time and settle permanently there[124].

"Now, we do know on the other side of it that USDA and other organizations put out estimates that can range that between 50 and 70% of agriculture workers are undocumented. Now, based on those estimates, we make our own extrapolations and it would be kind of foolish to make the assumption that we don't have undocumented employees out here. But as far as who they are and how we actually know, we don't have the capacity nor is it our responsibility as of yet, because we're doing everything that the Federal Government is requiring us to do. The other side of it is, that we're running the risk to face discrimination lawsuits by the employees, if we go out and suspect that somebody is undocumented and choose not to hire them based upon that assumption. But in terms of what the status of our employees is, as far as we know they are all documented. " said Bairstow on the theme of undocumented workers[125].

UNITED FARM WORKERS – unions and workers:

Broetje Orchards provides an example of a farm with high employment and housing standards. In bigger commercial farms, dairies, meat factories, however, workers often face mistreatment and working rights abuses. The United Farm Workers, the most influential union for farmworkers, is the organ that is proclaiming improvement on employment standards. In a telephone interview with the vice-president, Erik Nicholson said, "You know it's hard times for everybody. The agricultural industry is going through a hard time and they're having more difficulty obtaining credits, or you're seeing a reduction of acres. We've seen overproduction of apples, cherries, hops, so, traditionally what happens when the economy gets worse, it really gets bad for our members because the low wages they currently get, get further depressed and there's even less work available than normally"[126].

[122] Roger Bairstow
[123] Phillis Pulfer
[124] Phillis Pulfer
[125] Roger Bairstow
[126] Erik Nicholson

An example of UFW's scope is what is currently happening in Ruby Ridge Dairy where workers have been mistreated and a number of the workers asked for help from UFW. There is a case when their boss would not let them leave unless they signed a paper saying they were against the union. "If you look at Ruby Ridge, you've got evidence, I mean the've fired 25% of the workforce in an effort to purge all the union workers," Nicholson said[127].

Juan Ligoria who was recently fired from the dairy explained that the workers had no breaks, no lunch, no time to go to the restroom. "This is injustice, to be treating us like this. I told the mayordomo that I would seek some help for all the workers. He told me that many others have said the same, but people don't do anything. they come, and go, quit their jobs, but there are always new people to come. We stay here, because we have no choice, we need to keep the job. I knew that if they fired me, I would have to look for days for a new job. So I asked the UFW for help" [128]

Wage theft, injuries, not respecting a worker's right to breaks, are the biggest problems UFW deals with[129]. Washington has the second highest non-fatal injury rate of agriculture of any state in the nation[130]. Housing is another issue UFW tries to improve. The DLL inspections in Okanagan valley have shown a lot of substandard, unlicensed housing for farmworkers. There have been two fatal cases in Washington due to heat and lack of drinking water[131]. The union addresses the issue of substandard housing conditions that are a bigger problem in other parts of the state.

"We've got our work cut out for us because obviously workers don't have full time lobbyist representatives in Salem or Olympia, fighting for their interests as the growers have," Nicholson said, "Even the laws in the books really treat farmworkers as a second class worker because they are not afforded the same protections as all other workers. That goes from exclusion to overtime – it wasn't until 2004 that we finally got the right to breaks in Oregon. Before 2004 farmworkers did not have the legally guaranteed right to a break"[132] . "I think the other issue that is a very serious one that we have yet to overcome is the issue of race. I mean, the overwhelming majority of farmers in this region are white and the overwhelming majority of workers are not. And I don't think it's coincidental that the rules and regulations that are in place to protect farmworkers are substandard and I tend to think that if were primarily white folks about there doing this work, we'd think a little bit harder about excluding folks from overtime or allowing them adequate housing, some of the second class stuff that we subject immigrant workers to," Nicholson said. "The thing that we look at is political will, where we see ourselves as partners, and recognize that in order for this company to progress, they need to do right to their employees"[133]. The union is addressing the issues of segregation and equality that aim to improve employment standards and opportunities for farmworkers.

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[127] Erik Nicholson
[128] Juan Ligoria* pseudonym
[129] Erik Nicholson
[130] Erik Nicholson
[131] Erik Nicholson
[132] Erik Nicholson
[133] Erik NIcholson

After reading the sources discussed in the scholarly literature review above and summarizing the findings of the primary research, it is still hard to give a definite answer to the main question: *Is there an exit from the labyrinth of "Horizontal" low-wage jobs for farmworkers?* The answer lies in the ability to balance the application of social capital. Most farmworkers emigrate from Mexico, depending on contractors or family-members for finding their first jobs. Then they continue with the established path, following the decisions of the contractor. For the first years until they settle, farmworkers live in closed ethnic communities, speaking Spanish, not learning English. The basis for integration into the world outside of the immigrant community becomes more and more vague. Very few numbers of the farmworkers manage to balance the comfort of the useful social capital, and develop self-reliance. Then they develop skills and qualities that enrich their human capital. It is the human capital that can show them the exit. The exit itself gives two options – one is another low-wage path, leading to other industries, or the path of career trajectories. There is a misunderstanding between two of the groups of people I interviewed. The farmworkers are familiar with the fact that there are higher job positions, however, all of them seem to mention the lack of training. Juan Esparza was not provided any training after he was offered the position of grapevine manager and had to learn everything alone. Patricio regrets not being able to learn English for the past 25 years, but he has never attended an ESL class. Jesus Hernandez says that he does not have any time to study and practice English after work because he is usually so tired. The service providers, on the other hand, talk about ESL classes, scholarship opportunities, computer proficiency classes. Though not plenty, there are a number of free training and educational opportunities free to farmworkers, but there seems to be a miscommunication between the two ends of the line. Five of the seven farmworkers that were interviewed do not consider trying to get any type of professional training and find their job satisfying. Two of the interviewed farmworkers that are working at higher positions as crew managers were promoted to higher positions without any additional training, probably due to self-qualities and self-reliance. Considering that there are training opportunities and apparently not a lot of interest on the part of the farmworkers would be one approach to the issue. However, taking this route would mean to consider immigrant farmworkers passive and unwilling to undertake the challenges of job mobility and stability. Nevertheless, this approach would be underestimating and misunderstanding the nature of the problem with job mobility for farmworkers. Indeed, the structure of farm industry requires big masses of people and respectively fewer higher positions for supervisors, which automatically increases the competition. However, since there are not that many candidates with the necessary human capital, the competition quickly looses its point.

In addition, there is another important issue to be considered. The trip "pa' el norte" (USA) where they risked their lives, is already a statement and proof of their entrepreneurial spirit and extreme courage. Coming to work here is already a form of success and the best way to support their families back in Mexico. Thus, finding a job in the USA is an end in itself, rather than a means for professional development. Therefore, finding a way to keep their comfort zone (by living in an isolated Mexican community in the Farm labor housing or by continuing to speak only Spanish and never learning English) should not be seen as an unfriendly choice of isolaiton, but an excuse that they are in the USA so that they can provide better standard of living to their families. The key

word of this report turns out to be "***social capital***", it turns out to be the secret to the social and economic integration of immigrant farmworkers.

Recommendations:

The final recommendations in this report are applicable for any town with a significant Latino farmworker population or with the presence of farmworker housing facilities. In order to address the absence of job mobility and the difficulty in developing career trajectories by Latino farmworkers, I have to admit that the main problem is the gap of communication between farmworkers' communities on one side and farm growers, social service providers, and private non-profit organizations on the other side.

- There should be restructuring of the hiring system in the farm industry. A main point would be to create more accessible ways for farmworkers to find employment information, so that the majority of them do not have to depend on contractors. This would stimulate their self-reliance.
- There should be collaboration between business and government leaders in order to coordinate the development of human resource policy for farmworkers that would facilitate the linking of resources (both public and private) to farmworkers
- Stimulating Private sector initiative in professional and skill training for farmworkers (smaller farms, e.g.)
- On Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) proposal the government can coordinate program relations at the local, State, and Federal level[134]
- Non-profit organizations, such as BMAC, that provide social services should provide more accessible and diverse training opportunities, and provide the necessary advertising of the times and specifics of the courses
- Educational policymakers should consider integrating farmworking classes in the programs of local community colleges, free and accessible to farmworkers
- Increase the schedule variety of Community Colleges free ESL classes
- Non-profit and other private organizations should organize discussion-based-workshops that would meet together current Latino Farmworkers and Mexican-Americans that have been able to successfully develop career trajectories. The participants would be able to simulate job-interview situations, work on computer skills, etc. This would work as network-creating meetings in addition to the informational aspect of the discussions.

Appendix 1:

[134] Hornbeck, 259

1)
Interview with Jody Lindquist, managing director of Walla Walla Farm Labor Housings
Date: 16 October, 2009
Duration: 34 min
Language: English
Location: Administrative office in Walla Walla Farm Labor Housings
Interview was recorded

2)
Interview with Phillis Pulfur, retired director of Blue Mountain Action Council
Date: 3 November, 2009
Duration: 19 min
Language: English
Location: at Pulfur's house in Walla Walla
Interview was recorded

3)
Interview with Roger Bairstow, Broetje's Orchards
Date: 4 November, 2009
Duration: 11 min
Language: English
Interview recorded via conference call

4)
Interview with Eliza Cerna, teacher at the bilingual program at Davis Elementary, College Place
Date: 9 November, 2009
Duration: 28 min
Language: English and Spanish
Location: Davis Elementary School, College Place
Interview was recorded

5)
Interview with Aurelio Gonzales
Date: 25 October, 2009
Duration: 22 min
Language: Spanish
Location: Farm Labor Housing, Walla Walla
Interview was recorded

6)
Interview with Jesus Ormus Hernandes
Date: 25 October, 2009
Duration: 12 min
Language: Spanish

Location: Farm Labor Housing, Walla Walla
Interview was recorded

7)
Interview with Juan Cisnero,
Date: 25 October, 2009
Duration: 14 min
Language: Spanish
Location: Farm Labor Housing, Walla Walla
Interview was recorded

8)
Interview with Miguel Campos
Date: 9 November, 2009
Duration: 12 min
Language: Spanish
Location: Farm Labor Housing, Milton Freewater
Interview was recorded

9)
Interview with Patricio
Date: 9 November, 2009
Duration: 13 min
Language: Spanish
Location: Farm Labor Housing, Milton Freewater
Interview was recorded

10)
Interview with Erik Nicholson, UFW
Interview was recorded on the phone

11)
Group interview with workers from Ruby Ridge Dairy
Juan Ligoria, Pedro Tazan* pseudonyms, Arturo Sepulveda – regional representative, UFW
Date: 11 November, 2009
Duration: 48 min
Language: Spanish
Location: Reid Campus Center
Interview was Recorded

Appendix 2:

Glossary[135]

Migrant Agricultural Worker – A person employed in agricultural work of a seasonal or other temporary nature who is required to be absent overnight from his or her permanent place or residence. Exceptions are immediate family members of an agricultural employer or a farm labor contractor, and temporary foreign workers. Temporary foreign workers are nonimmigrant aliens authorized to work in agricultural employment for a specified time period, normally less than a year.

Seasonal Agricultural Worker – A person employed in work of a seasonal or other temporary nature who is not required to be absent overnight from his or her permanent place of residence. The same exceptions listed above for Migrant Agricultural Worker apply here.

Seasonal Hired Worker – Any worker employed less than 150 calendar days during a calendar year.

Shortage of Labor – Empirically, a shortage is the difference between the quality of labor supplied and the quantity of labor demanded when the hourly wage rate lies below the equilibrium wage rate – the wage rate that exactly balances quantity supplied and quantity demanded. The shortage concept can also be thought of as excess demand at the price of wage currently being offered. For this kind of shortage to exist, the wage rate being offered is below what workers are willing to accept. Increasing the wage rate will tend to eliminate the shortage.

[135] 2008 Agricultural Workforce in Washington State

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