

*Norris Foundation Summer Mini Grant Report  
Understanding the Educational Attainment of the Children of Farm Laborers in California*

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California agriculture is an important part of the state and national economy. California agriculture sales are larger compared to other states and is even larger in value than the agriculture of some countries (Sumner, Bervejillo, Kuminoff, 2003). By some estimates, California agriculture generates more than a million jobs in the state (Economy Watch, 2010). While this number is astonishing, the reality is that many of these jobs are in farm labor. With California at the forefront of agriculture in our nation's and state's economy, there is little doubt that many future generations of farm laborers will be in demand. However, how can we understand how this occupation affects the potential mobility of children whose parents are farm laborers? In the past, the effect of a farm laborer background on educational attainment of children was largely understood from data on White farmers and their children (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Featherman & Hauser, 1978). But the ethnic landscape of the U.S. and the industry provide ample reason for us to focus racial and ethnic minorities who now dominate the farm laborer industry.

The Census 2010 gives us an instant snap shot of how California looks today. In particular when we look at the racial and ethnic demographics of the state, we see that about 14 million residents (from the 37 million California total population) identify as Hispanic or Latino and of these about 11.4 million identify as Mexican. The racial demographics show that about 40 percent of the population identifies as White and 6 percent identifies as African American (see graph 1). The racial and ethnic demographics point to a large population of Hispanics and Latinos in California (about 37 percent of total population). From this large population, I plan to examine the subgroup that is currently employed in the agricultural industry and in particular the

segment of the population that is employed in the farm labor industry. The goal of this is to understand how farm labor affects the educational attainment of children.

This task will be accomplished by examining the Census data at the household level. In particular, I will examine children who still live with their parents. The Census is not intended to help us connect related individuals, so the household unit is the best way to examine relationships between relatives. For example, the Census in 2010 shows that in California, 30 percent of households include children of households and their spouses. When looking at household type we also see that a large number of households represent Husband-Wife family types with about 49.4 percent and single parents (male and female headed households) represent about 19 percent) of households. For this research, this suggests the high likelihood of being able to measure the data for children who live with parents.

The next challenge for this project is identifying the farmworkers using the 2010 Census data. Currently, the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS 2007-2009) estimates that there are 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States. The Current Population Survey estimates the number at less than 1 million, this number reflects a decrease in farm labor, but also a different methodology—the CPS uses households and the NAWS uses individuals.

However, identifying these households will be more accessible with the PUMS (Public Use Microdata Sample). This was scheduled to be released last year, but there has been a delay in the release set of this data (Census 2010). However, the IPUMS is an integrated version of the Census Data and one advantage is that it allows for comparison of data across other census years. I have currently been using this to identify variables that I might be able to use and compare with the 2000 Census Data.

With the support of Summer 2013, I have been able to submit my preliminary research to the Pacific Sociological Association meetings which be held in March 2014 in Portland Oregon. I am also hiring a student research assistant this month to help me download some preliminary data from the Census. While I wait for the main data to be released, I am reviewing the IPUMS data from 2000 and I would like to examine the American Community Survey (also Census data that is collected on a regular basis of a much smaller population).

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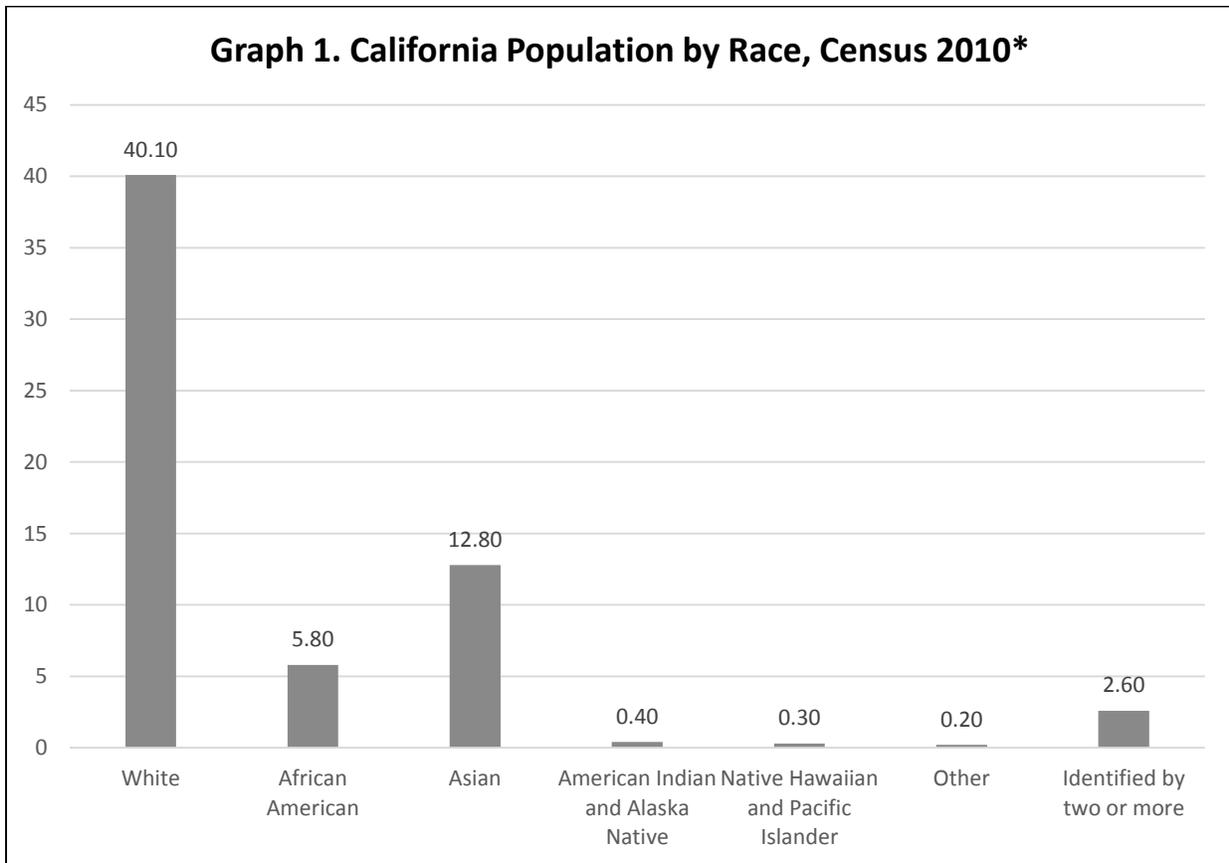
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\*Source: Census, 2010, Race of Non-Hispanic Whites in California.