

LAYERED DISPARITIES, LAYERED VULNERABILITIES: FARMWORKER HEALTH
AND AGRICULTURAL CORPORATE POWER ON AND OFF THE FARM

By

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Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

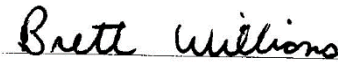
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Anthropology


Chair:


Brett Williams, Ph.D.


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Ann López, Ph.D.


Hugh Gusterson, Ph.D.


Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Date

August 7, 2013

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Washington, D.C. 20016

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To my Dad, Ronald L. Saxton.

To the People of the Corn and the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys.

And in memory of Cecile Mills.

LAYERED DISPARITIES, LAYERED VULNERABILITIES: FARMWORKER HEALTH
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the relationships between immigrant farmworker health, on-the-farm practices and the off-the-farm structures of agribusiness, and state policies governing immigration, labor, environment, health care and social welfare in Central Coast California. These structures articulate with long-standing race-ethnic, gender, and labor hierarchies that perpetuate and exacerbate a long legacy of capitalist violence responsible for (re)producing multiple layers of farmworker disparities, vulnerabilities, and social and environmental suffering for migrant farmworkers. These are documented as syndemics—layers of diseases and harmful social conditions relations, and as chronicities of disease and suffering that worsen over time within individual bodies and communities. Oftentimes, mainstream health and social service providers identify these problems as individual, cultural, and or behavioral in nature, failing to address structural violence and vulnerabilities and thus perpetuating health disparities. An interrogation of the workers' compensation insurance and pesticide approval systems in the state of California highlight processes of contestation that persistently negate the social and environmental suffering and embodied knowledge of sick and injured farmworkers. A number of social services, non-profits, philanthropic and corporate social responsibility projects are funded by the agricultural industry. While mitigating some suffering, such projects and programs fail to address the root sources of health inequalities and de-politicize farmworker health. To conclude, alternative, non-

capitalist solutions are explored that foster trans-worker solidarity and respect and that ensure that farmworkers' health, welfare, and survival needs are met.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of getting to, going to, and getting through graduate school involved the support, guidance, cheering, pushing, and love of many people over the course of 7 years. I have done my best to remember and reflect on each of these contributions: as grains of sand and sustained flows.

My dad, Ronald L. Saxton, the first doctor in his family, provided wisdom and strong support as a parent, wordsmith, applied scientist, community organizer, political philosopher, and gardener. This is especially evident through the many hand written letters and packages filled with articles related to my research and teaching, sweet study break treats, and financial aid. My mom, Vera E. Kaminski, cultivated my creative streaks and an almost indefatigable work ethic, which are embedded on these pages. She always pushed me to think about problem solving, to which the field of anthropology is especially well suited as it aims to be useful and relevant to the people we work with.

My maternal grandparents, Edward and Vera Kaminski, grew up as the children of immigrants amidst times of economic uncertainty and intense resentment of foreigners. As a child, Grandpa Kaminski worked summers alongside his mother and three younger siblings harvesting beans in Pennsylvania as seasonal migrant farmworkers. Their frugality produced savings passed on to their children and grandchildren. This helped fund portions of my graduate studies. Thanks go to my Uncle, Richard Kaminski, for taking care of my grandparents until their deaths and making sure their final wishes came to fruition.

My siblings, Elena and Ron E., also provided emotional support, rides to and from the airport, and encouragement during visits to Washington, DC while I completed

my courses and fieldwork. Ron E. also majored in anthropology and is pursuing a career in public health. It was especially nice to share my fieldwork insights with him and to hear the quantitative, epidemiological perspective in return. I also thank two of my half-brothers, Arnold Saxton and his wife BJ, and Walter Saxton for hosting me as I travelled west in my car to Watsonville, in addition to the Simpson, Artes, and Koppel families.

I feel very blessed to have a nurturing, supportive, intellectually fulfilling and unabashedly radical academic family to complement the strengths of my blood kin. I am indebted to Brett Williams, for adopting me as her advisee, providing honest feedback and good connections on all of my drafts and revisions, and for advising me during field work over the phone and in her home. Her Race, Gender & Social Justice and Anthropology of Consumption courses really helped me to develop many of the main ideas, theories, and concepts that flow throughout this dissertation. It is an honor to follow in her footsteps which can be traced back to her own dissertation writing and activism, organizing with tenants and strikers, and making tamales with farmworkers on the Texas-Illinois migrant circuit in the 1970s.

Adrienne Pine introduced me to the world of critical medical anthropology and the art and practice of militant anthropology and has provided a wealth of knowledge, insights, and inspiration for this work. In her Health Issues in Migration course, I learned how to work with new mediums of knowledge sharing, including blogs and film. Her professional bravery as a teacher, public scholar, and transnational organizer have encouraged me to mobilize my privileges as an activist-academic.

I visited Ann López after reading her book *The Farmworkers' Journey* (2008) in 2009, and ever since then, she has been an unwavering supporter of my work. I am grateful for the connections she facilitated for me as the director of the Center for Farmworker Families. She provided critical feedback and read every page of this dissertation. Dr. Ann also taught me art of the *tianguis gratis* (free flea market) and the *guerilla barrio piñata* (random neighborhood piñata party) which I have adopted as one of many creative approaches to building rapport with farmworkers.

Hugh Gusterson graciously joined my dissertation committee and has provided me with important links and connections to the anthropology of science and technology studies and elites. His work studying up nuclear laboratories greatly informed my own work studying agribusiness power and political economy on and off the farm.

There are other faculty at American University and other schools that deserve special acknowledgement as well for their support of me and my work. Dolores Koenig provided constructive criticisms and revisions on many of my National Science Foundation and Wenner Gren grant application drafts, both of which were successful. Debarati Sen served on my dissertation committee during the proposal phase, and also provided critical feedback, excellent reading suggestions, and moral support with respect to navigating the academy as a junior scholar. Joan Gero, Geoffrey Burkhardt, Bryan McNeil, Sabiyha Prince, Rachel Watkins, Sue Taylor, Lesley Gill, Ben Peacock, and David Vine in the anthropology department and Simon Nicholson and Robin Broad from the School of International Service have all taught me in the classroom, or served as reviewers of my work and exams as well as informal yet invaluable mentors and

supporters. Janice Idyll in the Office of Sponsored Programs provided essential assistance in processing my NSF grant applications and award money.

During my coursework, I also befriended many of the women who work at American University in housekeeping. I express my gratitude to them, especially Marta, Blanca, and Mercedes, for talking to me Spanish, sharing food with me, teaching me the ins and outs of doing research in my second language, and for calling me and reminding me not to forget them while I did my fieldwork and writing far away from Washington, DC. I owe them several cases of organic California avocados and tomatillos.

Additionally, I thank UCSC retired professor John Borrego for giving me my first insiders tour of the Pájaro Valley, Pat Zavella for her insightful feedback on Chapter 3, as well as UCSC faculty Julie Guthman, William Friedland, Melanie DuPuis, Flora Lu, UC Davis faculty Jonathan London and Don Villarejo, Cabrillo College professor of organic horticulture Sean Sweezy, and photojournalist David Bacon for orienting me to field work with farmworkers. Barbara Rose Johnston, Brian McKenna, and members of the virtual Environmental Anthropology, Medical Anthropology, and Critical Race and Food Studies list serve communities gave me sound and holistic advice as well as excellent reading references during the writing phase.

My undergraduate mentors at Hartwick College, Mike Woost, Mieko Nishida, and Esperanza Roncero, and Kimberly Grimes and Marco Hernandez of the Made by Hand International Cooperative also merit special praise for encouraging me to go to graduate school and pursue my interests in anthropology, social and environmental justice, and Latin American studies. I am also grateful to the social justice oriented Spanish teachers

and host families affiliated with the Centro Tlahuica de Lenguas e Intercambio Cultural (CETLALIC) for helping me to improve my Spanish language skills in a Frerian way, and to all of my informal Spanish teachers in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys.

So many classmates and friends from American University and beyond have stimulated my growth and supported me intellectually and emotionally along the path to the Ph.D. These amazing people include, but are not limited to: Craig Hughes, Sara Artes, Micah Trapp, Jennie Simpson, Julie Koppel-Maldonado, Mahri Irvine, Abby Conrad, Kara Newhouse, Rodolfo Tello, Shamira Abdullah, Sarah Otto, Jennifer Delfino, Michelle Carnes, Maria Amelia Viteri, Morgan Windram-Geddes, Elizabeth Woodward, Ritodhi Chakraborty, Kelly Feltaut, and Kelly Ernst Friedman. Beth Geglia, who without even knowing me, sent me an emergency copy of *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (2007) as I scrambled to finish conceptualizing my conclusion. Alice Brook Wilson, Carylanna Taylor, Joe Wiltberger, Laura-Anne Minkoff Zern, Tracy Perkins, and Sandy Brown have become professional colleagues with whom I can share ideas from coast to coast. Audrey Elizabeth Emmit, Victoria Mayo, and Eric Dirkson distracted me from my academics at all the right moments. Eduardo Guédez and Mary Lou Martin provided wholesome and safe refuge in my final year of coursework in the People's Republic of Takoma Park, MD.

There are so many incredible, generous and brilliant people in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys who guided me through my fieldwork and dissertation writing in so many ways. Most cannot be named, but I am forever indebted to the many *campesino/a compañero/as* who shared their knowledge and experiences with me and let me, a *gabacha* from Pennsylvania, into their lives. I am also very appreciative of the teachers

and administrators in the Pájaro Valley Unified School District whose stories are recounted in the pages that follow. This especially applies to the leaders of the Pájaro Valley Federation of Teachers union, especially Francisco Rodriguez and Jenn Laskin for facilitating my participation in the campaign against methyl iodide, allowing me to learn from students and teachers, and for providing resources and support to the cause. The staff at Migrant Education District XI, including Faris Sabah, Rosa Hernández, Veronica Fernandez, Liliana Barrios, Esmeralda Perez, Jesus Reyes-Villalobos, Jenny Russell, Angela DiNovella and Nancy Villicana graciously permitted me to observe, interact, and participate with teachers, parents and students, many of whom became *compañero/as* and active and enthusiastic participants in this research.

Sister Sandra Silva connected me with many *compañeras* by allowing me to hang out at the winter-time sewing circles and Thanksgiving dinners at La Asunción Catholic Church. Adam Sanders introduced me to several indigenous *compañeros* and gave me an insider's tour of farmworker housing in North Monterey County. Kat Saxton gave me invaluable historical insights about labor camp life. Veteran anti-pesticide activists including Paola Placencia, Sarah Ringler, Mary Flodin, Marilyn Garret, and the late Cecile Mills helped me put the contemporary struggles against soil fumigants into a deeper and more detailed historical context. Instructors at the Agricultural Land Based Training Association (ALBA) including Andy Rea and Nathan Hakleroad granted me access to the demonstration farm, where I weeded, learned a lot about organic farming, and met still more *compañero/as*. I thank the staff at Pesticide Action Network, Californians for Pesticide Reform, and Pesticide Watch, especially Dana Perls, for providing so many unique research opportunities and for their ongoing work protecting

public and environmental health locally and globally. I am also grateful to the lawyers, doctors, farmers, growers, non-profit directors, and social service providers who shared their perspectives with me which are contained within this dissertation, and to Teresa Kiehn for allowing me to volunteer and engage as an observer at the 2011 and 2012 AgSafe conferences.

I would also like to express my gratitude and solidarity with the following friends who believed in my work, cheered me on, sheltered me, alleviated the emotional pain of witnessing the violence of capitalism, and the physical pain that followed long bouts of reading and writing at the computer: Pam Sexton and family, Kathy and Duncan Blue, Breeze Medina and Family, Jovita Molina, Terry Ellis and Tim Flynn and family, Path Star, Frank Bardacke, Stephanie Bishop, Chris Lasher, Mavel Armijo, and the Matrons and Patrons of Husbandry of the Springfield Grange. Special thanks also go to my Watsonville Autonomous Brown Beret and Watsonville Bike Shack Cooperative comrades, including: Ramiro Medrano, Lorenzo Holquin, Yovanna Bravo, Carlos Mendoza, Rocio Natividad, Jorge Florez, Sep Susunaga, Sandino Gomez, Tomas Alejo, Sal Lua, Nayeli Gil, Yesenia Molina, Lizette Bedolla-Cruz, Frances Salgado-Chavez, and Manny Ballestranos. My research assistants, Yovanna Bravo, Silvia Perez, helped me transcribe thousands of pages of Spanish- and English-language interviews; without their help, I would probably still be writing this dissertation into eternity. Sal Lua also provided research assistance, taking photographs of fumigated fields, surveying the public cemetery, and showing me the hidden discarded fumigation tarps less than a quarter of a mile from his family's house.

Finally, I thank Luis Anguiano, for finding me in a field of cauliflower, taking me camping, hiking, and apple picking, eating all of my stress-induced home baked goods, and for being so caring and encouraging throughout this entire process.

This research was supported by funding from a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (Award #1059537), the Wenner Gren Foundation (Grant #8269), the American University College of Arts and Sciences Doctoral Dissertation Research Award (2010-2011), and the American University Provost's Dissertation Writing Award (2013). As collaborative an endeavor as this dissertation has been, all errors are my own.

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CHAPTER 1

ON THE FARM, OFF THE FARM: IDENTIFYING THE LAYERS OF FARMWORKER SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUFFERING

Driving down Highway 101 South on the way to the town of Greenfield in the southern part of Monterey County, California, vegetable and wine grape crops cover the agricultural landscapes where strawberries and cane berries predominate to the north. Lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, grape vines, and peas among other things, line the Salinas Valley in perfectly measured quadrants. Each side of the valley is surrounded to the east and west with two distinct mountain ranges. From the car, one can occasionally spot farmworkers planting broccoli transplants or thinning lettuce with long handled hoes, an irrigation crew laying down or testing pipes, a pesticide applicator flying through the air in a helicopter, making sharp turns in order to spray chemicals with more precision, or a few guys riding a tractor to till the soil, or deliver fertilizer or sulfur dust to a field site. Discarded white 3M-brand jump suits, the kind pesticide applicators wear, are recycled into scarecrows.

From late spring through early fall, the fields teem with activity: human and plant life burst forth. In some fields to the north of the city of Salinas, strawberry workers literally sprint up and down the rows upon filling their flats of twelve baskets or plastic market-ready clamshells in order to make their piece-rate quotas. The energy they exert in an attempt to stay on pace is undermined by a long wait in the line where one's harvest is counted and checked for quality. The bodily shifting between long stints of stooping, rounded backs visible over the rows of strawberries, and shorter periods of time when one can unfold and stand upright, make strawberry harvesting one of the most physically difficult jobs for farmworkers on the Central Coast. Yet, these thick

descriptions of bodily rhythms and plant growth cycles only account for what is visible, that is, when one is looking.

Don Mitchell (1996) argued that California's landscapes rendered farmworkers invisible; yet, it was difficult for me not to see them as I cruised down Highway 101, or Routes 129 or 156 outside of Watsonville. There, the topographic flatness of the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys creates a 360 degree panoramic view of agricultural fields. Holmes (2007), too, struggled to understand how migrant workers, who compose a sizable portion of the local populations in West Coast agricultural towns, remain unseen. He suggests:

Perhaps the erasure of these workers is best understood as a "public secret" (Quesada, 2005), in which Anglo residents simultaneously know of but do not see Mexican migrant laborers. The public gaze (especially of the elite public who shop at high-end grocery stores and live in exclusive neighborhoods) is trained away from and spatially distanced from migrant farm workers (see Sangaramoorthy, 2004, Chavez, 1992). In the rare instances that this gaze focuses on Mexican migrants, anti-"illegal" immigrant and racist rhetoric and actions often result (see Rothenberg, 1998, Quesada, 1999). (Holmes 2007:41)

Indeed, farmworker visibility is controlled by those who have the power to selectively acknowledge their presence. An occasional Univision piece on the local cable networks sometimes featured workers speaking for themselves about pesticides, special programs, or pending legislation. Local papers, on the other hand, exploited farmworker photo ops to discuss the agribusiness perspective: labor shortages, record breaking berry seasons or crop profits, or the pending perceived doom of new labor and pesticide regulations. Even as front page news, the intricacies of farmworkers' lives are rarely explored beyond the surface level. Upon reaching my fieldsite, I was eager to observe the movements and activities of farm work, even if from a distance; the details would be filled in with interviews, observations, and informal discussions.

California's Contradictions

California law includes a number of protections afforded to farmworkers, documented and undocumented, that do not exist in other states. These include a more rigorous pesticide evaluation system, workers' compensation coverage, collective bargaining rights, public education for the children of farmworkers, and access to emergency Medi-Cal and comprehensive prenatal services for pregnant women. Still, these legal structures are not always enforced and the private and non-profit programs that sometimes replace or replicate the state's responsibility for public health and welfare do not always alleviate suffering: in many cases, farmworker health and welfare problems may be exacerbated.

This dissertation explores the relationships between (im)migrant farmworker health, on-the-farm production and labor management practices, off-the-farm structures of agribusiness, and state policies and non-profit and private programs governing immigration, labor, environment, health care and social welfare in Central Coast California. Oftentimes, mainstream health and social service providers as well as agribusiness representatives identify farmworker health problems as individual, cultural, and or behavioral in nature, failing to address structural barriers to health. In so doing, they play a role in perpetuating farmworker health disparities. An interrogation of the workers' compensation insurance and pesticide approval and regulation systems in the state of California highlight processes of contestation that persistently deny farmworkers access to health benefits by negating their lived experiences and embodied knowledge. A number of social services, non-profits, philanthropic and corporate social responsibility projects are funded by the agricultural industry. While mitigating some

suffering, such projects and programs fail to address the roots of health inequalities and effectively de-politicize farmworker health.

The multi-dimensional interplay between farmworkers' lived experiences of poverty, racism and sexism, anti-immigrant sentiment, social and environmental suffering, and legal exception and exclusion resulted in a number of observable *syndemics* – layered diseases compounded by social disparities (Singer and Claire 2003) – within individual bodies and communities. The combinations, intersections, and layers of different kinds of oppression in workplaces and communities are what Bourgois (1988) referred to as *conjugated oppression*. These concepts help us to understand how farmworkers' lives are shaped by a number of different statuses, hierarchies, and structures that cannot be understood in isolation from one another at the biological or community levels (Holmes 2013:50). Other scholars refer to this as an intersectional approach. Zambrana and Thornton-Dill (2006:193) explain that:

...An intersectional analysis [...] provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of...health and challenges researchers to pay more attention to the social production and maintenance of inequality as it is manifested in the intersection of adverse social conditions such as poverty and poor housing, access to health care, and the quality of health care received.

During two years of ethnographic fieldwork in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys, I explored how the economic, political, and social power of corporate agribusinesses in California pervades not only the workplace, but policy making, and state and non-profit social and health safety nets, thus affecting farmworker health outcomes both on and off the farm. These arrangements, exacerbated and enhanced by race-ethnic, gender, and citizenship hierarchies (Holmes 2011; Cartwright 2011), perpetuate inequalities, reproducing many layers of disparity and vulnerability for farmworkers. The questions that will be addressed in this dissertation include: (1) What are the forms of structural

violence (Gualtang 1969; Farmer 2004) and structural vulnerabilities (Quesada et al. 2011) that affect farmworker health? (2) How do these specific “structures” – political, economic, environmental, and social policies, practices and ideologies – manifest and intersect in both on-the-farm and off-the-farm (e.g. at work, away from work) contexts? (3) What contradictions exist between California’s proclaimed progressive labor, environmental, and social safety net policies and programs and the lived experiences of farmworkers? (4) How are models of health that emphasize individual responsibility problematic when applied to farmworkers’ lives? (5) How do combinations of injuries, illnesses, and disparities produce syndemic health outcomes for farmworkers?

Political Economy and Ecology

The Central Coast of California stretches from Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties in the North to the northern reaches of Ventura County and the farming town of Oxnard to the South. This research focused on the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys in Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties, and included the cities of Watsonville, Hollister, and Salinas and other unincorporated communities on the outskirts. The Monterey Bay leads to the Pacific Ocean to the west, and there are three mountain ranges that shape the topography of the land. The Santa Cruz Mountains flank Watsonville to the north and east. From the Eastern Sierras, the Pájaro River flows to the Monterey Bay and constitutes the watershed for the entire area, with tributary streams and an intricate and delicate system of wetlands called sloughs (pronounced “slews”). The Gavilan and Santa Lucia Mountains envelop the Salinas Valley on the eastern and western sides, as the Salinas River snakes its way north and west to the Monterey Bay as well, up the center of the two ranges.

The many micro-ecologies of the Central Coast feature an abundance of natural resources that early Native American tribes relied on for subsistence and survival. These unique environments in close proximity to one another, with differing climates, soil types, and other features, enable the cultivation of a wide variety of agricultural crops on a commercial scale. The western coastal area of the Pájaro Valley features cooler temperatures and a characteristic morning fog that burns off by mid-morning. This is an ideal environment for growing crops like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, flowers, apples, and leafy greens and brassicas, which benefit from night time cooling and mid-day warming. Traveling north and east up the Pájaro River, the temperatures are hotter and the climate much drier. This is suitable for orchard fruits like apricots and cherries, tomatoes, peppers, onions, and garlic, and field crops like wheat. Beef cattle also graze on the grasses of the hills.

Most of the land upon which these crops are grown and harvested is owned not by the growers themselves, although some grower families are also landholding families. It is more common for landholding families to rent to growers and farmers. Many landowners have agricultural roots in the region but no longer actively farm. They are predominantly Anglo (Italian, Irish, Portuguese): the descendents of post-gold rush and Mexican annexation settlers as well as the European immigrants who came decades later. Some large corporations have landholdings in the area as well. One organic farmer pointed out the large strawberry field across the road from her ranch and informed me that the land was owned by DuPont and farmed by a Dole Berry contract grower. The Cooley family alone, one of the largest landholding families in the region, owns thousands of acres of agricultural and ranching lands, some of which has been

placed under the protection of the Santa Cruz County Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and the Elkhorn Slough Foundation (CA Department of Conservation 2010). Creating conservation easements legally ensures that land will remain in agricultural production in spite of threats of commercial development. It also ensures continued income generation for landowners who rent their lands to major growers in the area. Thus, these thousand acre parcels are more routinely divided into farms ranging in size from twenty acres to several thousands of acres. At least one farmworker per acre is the standard hiring regimen. Several other employees including crew foremen, supervisors, harvest managers, pesticides applicators, human resources personnel, accountants, food safety specialists and others may also be employed by the grower. Increasingly, farmworkers and their managers are sub-contracted through farm labor contractors (FLCs). Off-farm consultants may also be hired to do pest management, harvest planning, market strategizing, or private inspections for organic and other certifications. This organizational structure of agribusiness in California is all part of the historical legacy of the monopolistic distribution of Mexican land grants following the U.S. annexation of California. It has contributed to the style of farming and farm labor management heavily dependent on exploited migrant workers that persists into the present day (McWilliams 1966 [1935]).

The Salinas Valley features a similar agroecology and is interconnected with the Pájaro Valley as landholdings cross county lines and as crop cycles rotate around the region throughout the harvesting season. Salinas had long been known as the world's "salad bowl", where different varieties of lettuce and vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower are grown for the international fresh produce markets. Stands of wine grapes

are cultivated up into the hills of the Gavilan and Santa Lucia Ranges as well as in the lower lying valley plain. Recently, strawberries have surpassed head lettuce (e.g., iceberg) as the number two crop in profits and number one in acreage for the northern Salinas Valley. Santa Cruz County reported over \$5.5 million in “total gross production value of...agricultural commodities” for 2011, with strawberries, raspberries and blackberries, cut flowers, vegetables, potted and landscape plants, apples, lettuce, timber, and wine grapes constituting the highest value crops (Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner 2011). Strawberry growers in the Pájaro Valley also started shifting more land into raspberry and blackberry, known collectively in industry speak as cane berry, production because they could earn premium prices on these very high value and popular “super fruits.” Production values in larger Monterey County reach into the billions of dollars, with lettuce, strawberries, field vegetables, wine grapes, and specialty and baby salad greens bringing in the most profits (Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner 2011). In 2012, Monterey County's crop values reached over \$4 billion (Hornick 2013; Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner 2013). These crops are distributed and sold throughout the United States and exported to many countries including Canada, Japan, China, Taiwan, Mexico, and the Middle East (ibid. 2011).

Organic production is also on the rise in both counties, especially in Santa Cruz where in 2010 organic lands constituted 30 percent of all farmland with crop values of \$26 million dollars (Santa Cruz County Crop Report 2011). Sometimes organic and conventional growers are one in the same, as those producing for grower-shipper companies may diversify by growing both organic and conventional crops. This is the

case many of the largest berry-growing grower-shipper companies including Driscoll Berry Associates and its principle growing partner, Reiter Affiliated Companies, as well as Naturipe and CalGiant. Some of the larger exclusively organic producers, like Lakeside Organics or Earthbound Farms, producers of field vegetables and some fruit crops, maintain the same labor management dynamic as conventional farms. The only thing that shifts is the harvest management strategies with respect to organic farming practices. There are also several small, independent organic farms in the region that sell directly to consumers, restaurants, retailers, or wholesalers. A small minority have made a commitment to implementing fairer and healthier labor practices into their business plans. Larger grower-shipper companies also tout their corporate social responsibility and philanthropy programs as ways in which they give back to their workers and their host communities.

According to Storchlic and Hamerschlag (2005), even well-intentioned growers as well as those who have actively implemented healthier labor practices into their businesses struggle with the question of labor.

...The social aspects of sustainable agriculture have been eclipsed by greater attention to environmental and economic concerns, with few efforts to make sustainable agriculture more socially just Many sustainable growers have expressed a deep genuine interest in improving farm labor conditions, yet most do not know how to do so, or feel they cannot afford to (iii)

At the 2011 EcoFarm Conference, a panel of small, organic growers agreed to avoid any discussion of labor issues with respect to the sustainability of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), or farm share, programs in order to prevent the dialogue from getting too contentious. Thus, while organic farming in California is not standardized in terms of harvest or labor management practices, crop diversity, farm

size, or marketing strategies, almost all organic farmers are dependent on immigrant farmworkers from Mexico and Central America (Minkoff-Zern 2013).

California agriculture of all scales and types is structured by a highly competitive market economy. Even smaller-scale growers who focus on local marketing must compete amongst one another for sales at farmers markets and for consumer loyalty via CSA farm box shares. While some growers and farmers make efforts to shift to alternative production or labor practices, these are still embedded within a corporate, and hyper-privatized and monopolized capitalist economy, with its emphasis on individual choice, personal responsibility, and consumer driven change. For example, Guthman (2004, 2008) observed that organic farmers and growers as well as those engaged in the organic movement did not collectively express concern about pesticide drift. Instead, the leaders of the organic movement continued to assert resistance to further government regulation, even pesticide regulation, and urged consumers to make good choices to avoid consumption of pesticide residues: in other words, to let the market take its course with respect to eliminating the use of pesticides. Certainly, such an approach would do nothing to protect farmworkers or neighbors in rural areas from pesticide drift. As Guthman (2008), McCarthy (2006), and Brown et al. (2008) observe, creating a kinder, gentler, less environmentally toxic economy does not necessarily address the inherent contradictions of corporate capitalism, even in its most benevolent forms. Strohlic and Hamerschlag (2005) surveyed employees at different organic farms, big and small, single crop and multiple crop, throughout California, and concluded that any strategies to improve labor conditions on farms must also address the structural and market constraints faced by farmers and growers that limit what

improvements they can afford to make for their employees. Also of note is the overall lack of farmworker input with respect to the implementation of workplace improvements that benefit employee health and wellbeing (ibid).

Organic farming only represents 19 percent of all farms and 12 percent of certified acreage in California (Klonsky 2011:8) and a mere 2 percent of all food grown in the U.S. (OFRF 2013). This is still a fraction of overall agricultural production in the region, meaning that California agriculture remains heavily dependent on pesticides. Despite the overall market growth in sales of organic foods in the U.S., from \$1 billion in 1990 to over \$26 billion in 2010 (OTA 2011), \$12.5 billion worth of pesticides were sold in the U.S., amounting to 1.1 billion pounds applied in the year 2007 (EPA 2011). While the EPA claims that overall use is in decline, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation recently reported a 15 percent increase in pesticide application throughout the state over a four year period, with 75 million acres sprayed in 2010 (CA DPR 2011a). Monterey County applicators applied over 8.5 million pounds of pesticides in 2010, ranking number 6 on the CA DPR's county-by-county list, while in small Santa Cruz County, a little over 1 million pounds were applied (CA DPR 2011b).

Agriculture is a key source of employment in the region, employing thousands of people in the fields, in the packing houses and coolers, in distribution and trucking fleets, in the offices and headquarters of grower shipper companies, and secondarily in the government and private agencies that are charged with monitoring agricultural productivity, controlling pests, certifying for organic or other labels, and regulating labor and environmental policies. Oftentimes, job creation is used as an argument to prevent

further policy changes that might bring some relief to farmworkers. However, not all jobs in the industry are created equal. According to Minkoff-Zern and Getz (2011:17):

Approximately 700,000 farmworkers reside in California at any given time. Farm employment is unstable and the average farmworker is employed for only seven months of the year (nine months in California). For female workers the employment season is even shorter. Jobs are scarce, even during high season. In California, about 350,000 jobs are available from April to October and 275,000 from November to March.

This instability is definitely visible in communities like Watsonville and Salinas, where from November through March or April, more people used the food banks and depended on other forms of emergency and humanitarian aid or private loans, in their limited forms, to survive until the arrival of the next season. Even while employed, many farmworkers need additional help and support just to get by.

Labor (Im)migration: A Brief History

Popular narratives of immigration emphasize that poor people from other countries come to the U.S. for “a better life.” *A Better Life* is also the title of a recent feature film (Weitz 2011), in which a Mexican-origin day laborer struggles to provide for himself and his teenage son in Los Angeles, CA. He faces a number of barriers, including debt, under-employment, inadequate housing, economic instability, theft, selectively inattentive and discriminatory policing practices, harsh immigration policies, and intergenerational and family tensions. It is clear in the film that opportunities for immigrants are constrained to the point that *survival* rather than “a better life” becomes the ultimate goal. Indeed, when asked why they migrated, many of my *compañeros* responded with “*necesitamos comer*” (we need to eat) or “*para trabajar*” (to work).

California agriculture has always relied on underpaid and socially and politically marginalized migrant farmworkers. McWilliams reflected, “The exploitation of farm labor

in California...is as old as the system of land ownership of which it is apart” (1966 [1953]:7), referring to the massive appropriation of large tracts of land by white settlers in the 1800s following the demise of the gold rush. This settlement perpetuated the extinction of the indigenous peoples of California by forcibly displacing them from their lands and livelihoods. Mass murders of California Indians by would-be settlers were also common place. In California’s colonial era, Native Americans and Mexicans worked the fields, vineyards, and ranches for the Spanish missionaries, often as forced and unpaid workers or indentured servants (Street 2004). The end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 also incorporated Mexicans politically into what became U.S. territories in the Southwest, and many on the Mexican-side of the border migrated north (SPLC 2013:3).

After the gold rush from the 1850s through the 1880s, Chinese workers and their descendants also worked the fields following their displacement from gold mining, railroad building, and urban servant jobs (McWilliams 1966 [1935]). Racism towards Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Filipinos immigrants – all of whom at one point or another worked as farmworkers in California agriculture – intensified. White politicians and residents scapegoated Asians for everything from the spread of diseases like TB (Craddock 2004) to taking jobs away from and lowering the wages of white settlers (Library of Congress 2003). This led to the passage and strong enforcement of a series of Asian exclusion acts which purposefully sought to deport Asians and to prevent them from owning land or profiting from their labor and emerging businesses. While many Asian immigrants had experience and skills in agriculture, they were prevented from

owning their own land and starting their own farms by the very labor structures that employed them. As McWilliams noted:

The existence of large ownership units made possible the exploitation of cheap, coolie labor; while the availability of great reserves of cheap labor delayed the subdivision of land and prevented land settlement by small individual owners. (1966 [1935]:103)

Growers also capitalized on these race-based laws and ideologies by using language and cultural differences amongst employees to discourage workers from organizing (ibid). Similar structures and tactics are used into the present day, pitting the latest arrivals of indigenous Mexicans from the southern part of the country against Spanish speaking *mestizos* and documented immigrants. Holmes (2011) and Cartwright (2011) identify this as a farm labor hierarchy built around race, ethnicity, class, and citizenship status.

With Asian exclusion laws, restrictive quotas on white European immigration, and war time labor shortages during WWI and WWII, thousands of migrant farmworkers from Mexico crossed the U.S. border to work in the fields. When state and national politicians attempted to place quotas on Mexican immigration, the grower-shipper organizations in California quickly organized to contest these measures.¹ They requested a system that would provide an annual flow of migrant workers. Mexican families would cross the border for work at the start of the season and leave upon its completion. Some white residents and politicians scapegoated Mexicans for draining the public and social service coffers, as those migrant families who stayed on through the winter grew dependent on base-level assistance for their survival. Agriculture

1. Grower-shippers and agribusiness lobbyists remain active participants in contemporary immigration reform efforts (Hagstrom 2013; Morgan 2013).

justified this social subsidy to their industry as a means of making economic profit for the state. As one lobbyist testified in the 1920s, “If charity spends one dollar on the Mexican in California, the State profits two dollars by having them here” (McWilliams 1966 [1935]:127).

At the same time that growers insisted that Mexican farmworkers be allowed to stay, if only to work, they quickly quelled farmworker organizing in response to poor wages and working conditions by arresting and deporting any striking farmworkers or those affiliated with the emergent but short-lived unions. These deportations intensified during the 1930s, as political anxieties about having enough jobs and social benefits for suffering citizens during the Great Depression intensified. This justified the deportation – or, at the time, what was called “repatriation” – of over 2 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans from the U.S. This included many citizens whose families had lived in the U.S. for generations (Block 2006).

During the Great Depression, groups of black and white agricultural refugees from the southern states migrated to California to escape droughts and price collapses that devastated their livelihoods as farmers and farmworkers. They soon accompanied Mexican Americans and Filipinos in the California fields. World War II sent most of the white and black farmworkers off to war, leaving California growers with a severe labor shortage.

The U.S. and Mexican governments officially brokered a deal to seasonally import millions of Mexican migrant farmworkers to attend to the harvests. The Bracero Program was supposed to be mutually beneficial for both countries and to growers and farmworkers. Grower employers were legally required to provide *bracero* guest workers

with the following: decent housing, a minimum wage, at least a month's worth of work, and partial coverage of transportation expenses to the U.S. and back to Mexico at the end of the season (SPLC 2013). The law also required that the U.S. government supervise the program closely, provide support to workers who had been abused by their employers, and pay 10 percent of the farmworkers' wages into a pension fund in Mexico. Braceros faced many abuses, including no freedom of movement, wage theft by both growers and the U.S. and Mexican governments, decrepit housing, living and working conditions, and the disappearance of their pensions (Hahamovitch 1997; Galarza 1964).

Farmworkers in California organized and established the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) in the 1960s to resist these and other routine workplace abuses, ranging from pesticide exposure, unlivable wages, and inadequate compensation for workplace injuries. Because their contracts were written in English, many braceros did not know the conditions of their labor before arrival (Bracero History Archive 2013). The legacy of abuses from the Bracero era continue into the present under the H2A guest worker program, established after the cancellation of the Bracero Program in 1964 and revised after the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986 (SPLC 2013).

In addition to the labor and immigration histories recounted above, IRCA and free trade agreements brokered between the U.S. and Mexico and Central America have perpetuated cycles of unauthorized immigration. With the naturalization of millions of immigrants under IRCA in 1986, California agriculture became more dependent on the use of farm labor contractors (FLCs) to secure undocumented workers who could be

paid lower wages and assuage the labor shortages induced in part by naturalized citizens who left the fields for other opportunities and careers (Rosenberg 1995; Taylor and Tilmany 1992). Bardacke (2011), who worked in the lettuce and celery fields during the height of the UFW's activism and organizing, observed that the real wages of farmworkers have decreased substantially over the past forty years. This has been enabled in part by the collapse of political power of the UFW from the 1980s into the present and despite the rising costs of living along California's Central Coast and the prolific financial growth and consolidation of agribusinesses in the area. The use of FLCs ultimately limits growers' legal liability for breaking labor laws; they use the third party to deny knowingly having hired undocumented workers. They can also defer financial responsibility for workers' compensation and other expenses to FLC managers.

FLCs can be sued, but their existence complicates the process of determining who is accountable in the case of a workplace injury or death. The FLC crew leaders present when Maria Isavel Vasquez Jiménez, a 17 year old pregnant farmworker, died of heat stroke and dehydration in a vineyard in the San Joaquin Valley in 2008 failed to get Maria Isavel medical attention (Wozniacka 2011). They also did not provide legally mandated shade, heat safety trainings, and drinking water for their workers (ibid). These regulations passed in the California State Legislature in 2005 following the heat-related deaths of several farmworkers. They are the strictest in the country (Martinez 2009; Khokha 2008). The court fined and cited the FLC owner and two other supervising employees; no jail time was served (Wozniacka 2011). At present, two lawsuits are pending: one from the California District Attorney for \$500,000 against the grower on

whose land Maria Isavel died for failing to provide legally mandated heat safety trainings and worksite protections, and another for \$262,700 from the California Department of Occupational Safety and Health (CalOSHA) against the FLC for breaking 8 laws. CalOSHA inspectors discovered these infractions during a routine safety inspection prior to Maria Isavel's death (Martinez 2009). These are rather minimal penalties for the work-related death of a teenager. However, Martinez (ibid) and lawyers I interviewed indicated that fines are typically significantly less with respect to grower or FLC infringements of labor and environmental policies in California. If employers can prove that they did not break any laws with respect to a workplace injury or death, their fines will be even less.

Shortly after the passage of IRCA in the early 1990s, international free trade agreements – such as the North American Free Trade Agreement between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada – worked to displace rural Mexican peasants from their lands and livelihoods, augmenting streams of vulnerable, undocumented immigration to the farm fields of California. López (2008), Kingsolver (1996), and Nadal (1999) describe the socio-economic engineering of NAFTA to induce labor migration. Ironically, the California Farm Bureau Federation supported NAFTA “to reduce illegal immigration by creating job opportunities in Mexico” via the expansion of U.S. Industries, including agribusinesses, into the Mexican countryside (López 2008; Watte 1992). At the same time, the Farm Bureau defended the priorities of California agribusinesses to have access to a cheap and flexible labor force on U.S. farms.

As the effects of NAFTA took their toll on residents of the Mexican countryside, more and more indigenous language Mexicans from the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero,

Puebla, and Chiapas started migrating to work in California agriculture. Many indigenous Mexicans had migrated to harvest commercial crops in regions far from home within Mexico at least since early 1900s (Stephen 2007; Edinger 1985). Notable among the examples of intra-Mexican migration is the movement of indigenous people from Oaxaca, Guerrero and Puebla to the commercial fruit and vegetable fields of Northwestern Mexico, like the Culiacán Valley in Sinaloa (Wright 1990), Sonora, and the Baja Peninsula, and to the sugar cane fields of Veracruz. Indigenous Mexicans have been migrating to the U.S. since the Bracero program (Bacon 2002; Stephen 2007). Their numbers increased from the early 1980s, with dramatic increases in the 1990s and 2000s as families joined unaccompanied males in the fields and farming communities of California (Mines et al. 2010). At present, they represent at least 30 percent of the migrant farmworkers in California; 46 percent live and work along California's Central Coast, including the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys (ibid).

At the time of my research, fewer and fewer families engaged in migrant farm work, which entails moving from work site to work site within the U.S. or between the U.S. and Mexico. This is a phenomena that Zavella (2011), and López (2008) attribute to the desires of immigrant farmworker parents who want their children to complete school. For the first time in almost half a century, immigration rates from Mexico are declining due in part to:

Weakened U.S. jobs and housing..., heightened border enforcement, a rise in deportations, the growing dangers associated with illegal border crossings, the long-term decline in Mexico's birth rates and broader economic conditions in Mexico (Passel et al. 2012).

The fear induced by anti-immigrant policies in states like Arizona, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi (Johnson 2012) discouraged undocumented farmworkers in those

states from returning to work for the 2011 and 2012 seasons leaving fruits and vegetables to rot in the fields and causing great economic hardships for area growers (Fausset 2011). Transnational border crossings are also becoming more dangerous and difficult with intensified Border Patrol and security, and the rising price of coyotes.

In 2012, a few growers in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys started posting large recruitment signs on the roadsides. By 2013, almost every major grower used some combination of radio, newspaper ads, and billboard signage in Spanish to attract workers. Worries circulated amongst growers and farmers about not having enough workers to harvest the crops and the economic devastation this would cause. More and more white school buses, used to transport workers employed by FLCs from work site to work site, traveled to the Watsonville area, and Watsonville-area farmworkers were recruited to work in fields and orchards as far away as Paso Robles and Bakersfield, to the north and east of Los Angeles respectively. There are more hours available for the farmworkers who have managed to stay in the U.S.; however, transferring this amount of work to fewer people is sure to take a toll on the health and welfare of an already vulnerable group. Wages have increased slightly but not uniformly. One farmworker who retained year round work with his employer at CB North (Dole's harvesting arm) told me about a small strike that took place at his worksite in which farmworkers demanded a ten cent increase in the piece rate. Another company voluntarily raised the hourly wage for non-harvesting work from \$8.25 to \$9 an hour in order to attract more workers and maintain the loyalty of longer-term employees. However, in general, most farmworkers I spoke with reported no significant wage raises amidst the labor shortage. In many respects, the farmworkers of today share a great deal with their predecessors

in terms of the impacts that anti-immigrant sentiment and policies, inadequate enforcement of labor laws, exclusion from social insurance and protections, and the insecurities induced by shifting economies have on their lives.

Key Concepts

Throughout this dissertation, I use the Spanish word *compañeros* over more traditional terms for research participants, including subjects and informants.

Compañeros, which means friends or work or classmates, better reflects the strength of the relationships I developed with people who engaged with me and my research project over the course of my time in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys. While I did not use a participatory action research model,² I do owe a lot to my *compañeros* for helping me unravel the many layers of vulnerabilities and disparities detailed in this dissertation. I want to acknowledge the shared production of knowledge that took place during my research as well as the friendships and collective activist work that sprung forth in some cases.

I use the word *(im)migrant* to describe the liminal status faced by many farmworkers from Mexico. Castañeda (2010) clarifies that immigration implies a permanent end-destination from the country of origin to the country of final settlement; however, this is rarely a certainty for farmworkers. While many farmworkers in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys have settled semi-permanently – due in part to the dangers and costs of routine border crossings (with and without papers) and for the sake of

2. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is “collaborative research that has positive social change as an explicit goal” (Ostergaard 2006:6). It involves more active engagement from community participants in research from project conception, execution, discussion and analysis of research results, and implementation of proposed solutions to shared problems. Another concept describing this research model is Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR).

allowing their children to stay in school more consistently – many do not wish to stay in California for the entirety of their lives. Some may have to wait until retirement to return to Mexico, slowly sending remittances to home *pueblos* to build houses or start small businesses for other family members. Others are forced to return before they intend to following an injury or serious illness or as a consequence of involuntary deportation. Still others who manage to return to Mexico after a period of time working and living in the U.S. may one day cross the border again out of economic necessity. The documentary, *The Other Side of Immigration* (Germano 2009), features former migrants living and working in Michoacán as they contemplated a return to the U.S. They discussed the limits, sacrifices, and possibilities that such journeys entail in contrast to the everyday struggles of attempting to make it as a small-scale peasant farmer. These differences and uncertainties are captured by Zavella's concept of "peripheral vision" in which migrants understand their "transborder lives" (Stephen 2007):

Life fluctuates, and is contingent upon the vagaries of the linked economies and shifting, polarized politics related to immigration in the United States and emigration in Mexico As a form of transnational subjectivity, peripheral vision reflects the experience of feeling at home in more than one geographic location... Those from the working class or living in poverty have fewer resources with which to organize their lives and often must adapt with little recourse... Thus, peripheral vision expresses subjects' sense of economic, social, cultural or political vulnerability in a globalized world Transnational subjectivity includes feelings that one is neither from here nor from there, not at home anywhere. (Zavella 2011:8-9)

The term *migrant* captures a broader range of human movements and vulnerabilities across many kinds of borders (porous as they may be) throughout the life cycle: transnational, regional, rural-to-urban (Castañeda 2010), job and economic cycles, social and cultural boundaries, as well as racial-ethnic and gender hierarchies (Stephen 2007; Zavella 2011). A combination of the terms immigrant and migrant, as in

“im/migrant” or “(im)migrant,” “[underscores] the processual and shifting relationship between the two [interrelated processes of immigration and migration and lifelong shifts from migrant to immigrant]” (Castañeda 2010:8).

I use the words *agribusiness*, *corporate agriculture*, and *agro-industry* interchangeably to reflect and encompass the entire agricultural food production complex, which includes a wide range of actors and processes. These include grower-shipper companies, wholesale and retail enterprises, farm labor contractors, insurance companies and risk management specialists, lawyers and lobbyists, chemical companies, agriculturally affiliated or funded non-profit organizations, and university, state, and private research agencies (and the increasing interconnections between them as documented by Philpott 2012). Agriculture and agribusiness are not limited to the farms and fields where farmworkers work. Exploring the different dimensions of increasingly globalized and consolidated food production systems, especially as they have evolved in California, enabled me as an ethnographer to understand how on-the-farm practices intersect with those that take place off-the-farm but that still have serious consequences for farmworker health, welfare, and survival.

Social suffering and *environmental suffering* are key concepts mobilized in this dissertation to describe farmworkers living with health and other disparities. These terms underly how social, political, and economic inequalities become embodied as diseases, injuries, and deaths, and how “trauma, pain, and disorders” are both “health conditions” and “political and cultural matters” (Kleinman, Lock and Das 1997:ix). Understanding farmworker health outcomes as social suffering resists the tendency by biomedicine and business cultures to individualize people’s problems and to assign

blame. The framework also understands that suffering “is “actively created and distributed by the social order itself...as a product of agents’ position in the social space...” (Das 1995; Klineberg 2002; Auyero and Swinton 2009:16). Environmental suffering, as described by Auyero and Swinton (ibid:17) is a kind of social suffering that is specifically connected to “the concrete polluting actions of specific actors – and on the factors that mold the experience of this suffering.” The prevalence of environmental racism and classism – the increased likelihood that poor people of color will work for and or live in proximity to polluting industries or sites – means that researchers can no longer ignore “that environmental factors are key determinants in the reproduction of destitution and inequality...” (ibid:18). Exposure to pesticides and workplace injuries and illnesses are shared experiences for many residents and workers across occupational, national, and social boundaries and they are phenomena over which people have very little control. These conditions and the policies and practices that either support or inadvertently enable them are made far from the sites of social and environmental suffering, as this dissertation will show.

Structural Violence and Vulnerabilities

Recently, anthropologists have pushed for the immigrant health research agenda to go beyond narrow conceptualizations of culture that neglect broader social, political, economic, and environmental assaults to community health (Hirsch 2003; Castañeda 2010; Kleinman and Benson 2006; Taylor 2003:14). Many anthropologists have engaged with theories of structural violence and structural vulnerability (Quesada et al. 2011), in order to challenge individualized health interventions and tendencies towards

victim blaming in biomedicine, public health, and social service settings as well as in the public sphere more broadly: in the very communities in which we work.

Farmer (2004:307) describes *structural violence* as “violence exerted systematically – that is, indirectly – by everyone who belongs to a certain social order.” Benson more specifically identifies the elements of the “structural”: “...the role of corporations, markets, and governments in fostering various kinds of harm in populations” (2008a:590). These institutions, with their hierarchies and unequal social relations, cause suffering for humans and communities. The ideologies and practices that produce structural violence are rendered invisible by the ordinariness of their existence. The power they possess works directly to maintain the status quo of strict hierarchies and inequalities, but is often taken for granted (Winter and Leighton 2001). As a result, the suffering and death produced by structural violence “is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair” (ibid). In relation to the connections between structural violence and poor health and human suffering, anthropologists pose the following questions:

How [do] various large-scale social forces come to be translated into personal distress and disease[?] By what mechanisms do social forces ranging from poverty to racism become *embodied* as individual experience? (Farmer 2009:11).

Embodiment includes the sometimes visible and the sometimes invisible social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological processes wherein people and communities “literally incorporate, biologically, the social and material world in which we live” (Krieger 2001:672).

In critical medical anthropology, Singer et. al. (1992) use a political economy approach to help flesh out these often vaguely defined and poorly identified “structures” at the micro and macro levels. They situate problem drinking (the consumption of

alcohol in quantities that damage ones overall health and wellness) amongst Puerto Rican immigrants living in New York City within a deep history of evolving power relations and inequalities between island residents and colonial and imperial occupants. This history includes the unequal power relations in colonial times that transformed ritualistic production and consumption of alcohol by indigenous peoples into a transnational system of market-based production and worker exploitation. The horrendous working conditions on sugar cane plantations and rum distilleries induced daily palliative alcohol consumption.³ The introduction of new Catholic celebrations also incorporated heavy drinking into seasonal routines. Later, the dispossession of Puerto Rican farmers from their lands during the period of U.S. imperialism and the transition of the economy from male-headed agrarian households to a largely female workforce in the low paying service and tourist industries further disrupted and damaged the lives and livelihoods of men. This instigated patterns of immigration to the U.S., where male workers occupied the lowest paying and least stable jobs accompanied by the adoption of U.S.-style working class drinking habits fueled by cheaper and widely available products and heavy advertising. Delving into this history helps us to understand the life (and death) story of a Puerto Rican immigrant: a man who lived and suffered through many of these political, market, and social transitions.

Anthropologists have mobilized the theoretical frameworks of structural violence in their work with farmworkers in the U.S. Benson (2008a:591) identifies the following “conditions of structural violence” amongst the farmworkers he worked with in North

3. Holmes (2013:99) attributed problem drinking amongst male farmworkers he accompanied on the migrant circuit between Oaxaca, California, and Washington state to social stigmatization at work. Thus, he characterizes this heavy consumption of alcohol as a form of “self medication”: something that temporarily alleviates the physical pain and emotional trauma of farm work.

Carolina tobacco fields: “... deplorable wages and endemic poverty, forms of stigma and racism, occupational health and safety hazards, poor health and limited access to services, and the constant threat of deportation” (see also Arcury and Quandt 2007; Griffith and Kissam 1994; Oxfam America 2004; Smith-Nonini 1999; Thompson and Wiggins 2002; Villarejo 2003). These everyday forms of violence are exacerbated by the fact that farmworkers are often rendered invisible: by their undocumented status, by their residence in geographically remote rural locations often in camps or dwellings out of sight (Holmes 2007; Benson 2008a), and by their overt exclusion from official census counts (Azevedo and Bogue 2001). Such erasures are built into policies and practices of *agricultural exceptionalism*: the legally sanctioned exclusion of agricultural laborers from basic work place protections and rights. According to Wiggins (2009), following the passage of the New Deal in the 1930s, southern politicians and land owning elites enacted their own state laws to prohibit African American workers from having equal protection from abuse, from being able to unionize, or from achieving upward mobility (see also Triplett 2004). Into the present day, at the national level, farmworkers do not have the same collective bargaining rights that most other workers do, and are not guaranteed a minimum wage, overtime pay, or special protections for child workers (Wiggins 2009).

While the state of California, the site of study for this dissertation, is known for being somewhat more inclusive of farmworkers – for instance, with respect to collective bargaining rights,⁴ stronger workplace protections and environmental regulations, and

4. Recently, grower shipper companies have wielded their power over workers’ lives and welfare to nullify union elections by failing to acknowledge their validity or using the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) boards to void and or delegitimize union election outcomes. California may have the most unionized farmworkers in the country, but it is significant that most farmworkers statewide remain non-unionized. According

full coverage under workers' compensation policies – this does not guarantee that these laws are enforced adequately if at all for the most marginalized workers. *De jure* protections are pitted against *de facto* realities shaped by the power and financial influence of the agricultural industry and its affiliated lobbies (e.g. agro-chemical, insurance). The enforcement arms of the state and federal governments have also been stripped of the authority, funds and resources necessary to ensure that employers are following health and safety rules and that workers protected from social and physical harms.

Farmer acknowledges how dominant worldviews can divert attention away from not only the individuals and communities most likely to endure social suffering, but also from the root causes of the everyday violence that produces health disparities and inequalities (2004; in Benson 2008a:593). This is very clear with the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the U.S., accompanied by anti-immigrant policies. These include the attempted exclusion of undocumented children from public education and services in California in the 1990s (Zavella 2011), the successful and traumatizing prohibition of bilingual education in California public schools (ibid), and the legalization of racial profiling to facilitate deportations of undocumented immigrants in Arizona, Alabama, and Georgia. In other cases, Benson asserts: "Oftentimes, the problem is not that suffering is invisible or its causes unknown. Individuals and whole groups can have something at stake in actively overlooking and taking distance from other people's suffering" (2008a:594). In the case of agribusiness, low worker wages and political exclusions are often justified in the name of protecting a multi-billion dollar industry

to Meister (2002): "...[union] contracts have been signed by growers on only 185 of the 428 farms where workers have voted for unionization since the ALRA's passage."

which contributes to local job creation. Rather than being invisible, these practices are known and become normative, often justified by racist, sexist, and nativist sentiments. Benson explains: “Noncompliance [with labor, safety and environmental laws] for growers is a beneficial and strategic way to compete in international commodity markets, while consumers...reap the benefits of cheaply priced products” (ibid:620). Benson also documents how anti-immigrant and racist attitudes operate in a North Carolina farming community to justify immigrant farmworker social, economic, and political exclusions. These beliefs about Mexicans as inferior, lazy, or naturally weak also enable employers to deny workers’ claims about the impacts of farm work on their health. The structural inequalities that support the farm labor status quo in North Carolina include vulnerabilities for both farmworkers and grower employers: “downward economic pressure on agricultural production, the power of agribusiness corporations, systemic government neglect, and mass-media stereotypes” (594). Benson, and Holmes (2007) resist casting blame on individual actors, noting that “Growers are a node through which harm passes and at which it is localized” (Benson 2008a:621); they are not the root causes of structural violence.

In his ethnographic work with farmworkers harvesting berries and fresh cut flowers in the Skagit Valley in Washington state, Holmes explores how strict workplace management and operations, organized around an “ethnicity-citizenship-labour hierarchy [...] produces correlated suffering and illness” (2007:41) He observes “that this injurious hierarchy is neither willed nor planned by the farm executives and managers; rather, it is a structural form of violence” (ibid; see also Holmes 2011, 2013). The relationships between these structures and the human harm and social suffering they

produce, especially amongst undocumented indigenous migrant farmworkers, largely goes unacknowledged by all other workers in the farm labor hierarchy: from farm owners, to management, to seasonal harvesters (ibid). This enables the naturalization of both socio-economic positions on the farm, as well as assigned tasks and the bodily postures assumed work in the fields. This naturalization of hierarchy and workplace management is harmful to some, but provides economic benefits to the growers, whether or not they acknowledge the health consequences of their management policies or farming practices. Stooped labor in particular is deemed more appropriate for those workers who are already closer to the ground, both physically in terms of presumed phenotypes of indigenous Oaxacans, and metaphorically in terms of the low status of indigenous people in Mexico, in the U.S., and transnationally (Holmes 2007). Thus the micro structure of the farm where Holmes did his fieldwork mimics macro level hierarchies that value different people and bodies unevenly and unequally. This places different degrees of physical and psychological burden on different ethnic groups employed by farm work. Still, the grower families Holmes studies are also facing pressures beyond their control. A long contemporary history of small family farm closures in the region is compounded by competition from other strawberry growing regions, namely California and China, and the uncertainties that product contracts with larger name brands will subsist into the future (ibid). Benson (2008b) sees, too, how the globalization of the tobacco industry, paired with the vilification of the commodity in the U.S. are forcing growers to diversify their crop profiles and put more pressure on farmworkers to ensure ultra high quality tobacco leaf that can compete with cheaper leaf from abroad.

In order to be an effective tool for social problem solving and change, the anthropological concept of structural violence must be accompanied by “thick description” (Geertz 1973), or else there is no way to identify specific actors or institutions that instigate or perpetuate the violence of everyday life. Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes (2004:318), in response to Farmer (2004) push for more specificity and tangibility, lest structural violence remain: “a [theoretical] black box.”

The concept needs to be elaborated, complicated, and diversified – perhaps even redefined – or it will deflect harmlessly off the ivory towers in which ethnographers have historically been trained not to see the global forces and power inequalities that propel intimate suffering (ibid)

Wacquant, also in response to Farmer (2004:322), emphasizes the importance of differentiating and understanding different kinds of violence and how they intersect, including intentional physical violence and brutality at multiple levels. The differences and intersections between racism, gender inequality, economic, political and social violence as exercised by the state or other powerful institutions or actors cannot be understood or analyzed in isolation from localized forms of violence such as domestic violence, homicide, rape, genocide, or military presence. Green reiterates these points, adding to them the importance of acknowledging how structural violence can become internalized and or localized by victims.

These violence(s) of everyday life, as Arthur Kleinman has called them, are multiple, often mundane and partially obscured, yet they profoundly shape people’s subjectivities and practices and are implicated in ordinary people’s overt acts of violence and lawlessness toward each other. (2004:219)

Farmer conceptualizes the nodes of oppression as a “social machinery” and the resultant social suffering and health inequalities as “ostensibly ‘nobody’s fault’” (2004:307). He sees the roles in which historical erasures and institutional “desocialization” play in the reproduction of inequality and social suffering. However,

Green (2004), Kirmayer (2004), and Wacquant (2004) critique this hesitancy to name and identify the individuals and institutions that are directly responsible for the horrendous suffering that Farmer describes in his work as a physician anthropologist in Haiti. Green discusses how “structural impunity” is produced and reproduced by such intentional erasures, both at the institutional or state level and amongst the people being harmed. Kirmayer sees these erasures not as processes of “desocialization” but of purposeful “socialization that serves consumer capitalism” (2004:321). Wacquant reemphasizes the importance of tracing these historical and contemporary forms of oppression to their root sources instead of relying on an overly vague “concept that somehow diffuses responsibility in order to expand its ambit” (2004:322). In response to Farmer’s call for more hard science dedicated to documenting the death tolls of structural violence, Benson (2008a), too, notes the intentionality (versus unintentionality claimed by Farmer) that influences how things are seen or how they remain unseen and unacknowledged:

It is not only scientific knowledge that influences the visibility or invisibility of suffering and harm but also subjective acts of meaning making, patterns of moral reasoning, and cultural logics of accountability that can encourage people to look at suffering (and each other) in particular ways. (594)

Anthropologists have sought to make the concept of structural violence more approachable and useful to clinical practitioners and social service providers who rarely receive training in political economy or ecology. *Structural vulnerability* places more emphasis on how an individual or group’s place within systems of economic, political and social oppression reproduces health disparities and inequalities that are too often attributed to the bad decisions of individuals. Quesada et al. (2011) explain the urgency of this re-direction in studies and clinical applications of health:

Demystifying agency and removing the moral judgement inherent to a theoretical concept that implies that individuals understand and control the consequences of their everyday actions can contribute to rectifying misdiagnosis, blame, and maltreatment that accompany the experience of poverty and cultural subordination. This is especially important in a society like the United States, which individualizes responsibility for survival and relies on an ideology of free market forces to distribute goods, services, and health to the disenfranchised" (342)

Holmes (2007, 2011:445; 2013) locates the social suffering of farmworkers employed by small to medium scale growers in Washington state by conceptualizing a "continuum of structural vulnerability." This continuum is organized around the different intersections of ethnicity, citizenship status, and one's role in the farm labor hierarchy, what Bourgois (1988) calls "conjugated oppression" and what others sometimes refer to as "intersectionality" both of which are defined above (Mullings and Schultz 2006; Weber 2006; Zambrana and Thorton-Dill 2006:193). Holmes observed marked differences in status and vulnerability to injury and suffering even amongst indigenous Oaxacans who are segregated from outside and from within their community by "a pecking order of perceived indignity" or a "hierarchy of [perceived] modernity" (2011:445). The continuum also allows one to see how vulnerabilities from different layers of the ethnic-class farm labor hierarchy exacerbate one another. The market instability for berry growers in Washington state means that workers employed as harvesters must work harder and faster to pick and package fruit that meets the high quality standards of buyers and in the quantities demanded by value adding industries. Thus, "Everyone on the farm is structurally vulnerable, although the characteristics and depth of vulnerability change depending on one's position within the labor structure" (ibid:445). By analyzing how different vulnerabilities interact and intersect within the ethnic, class, citizenship, and I would add gendered hierarchies of labor, the focus of

interventions and blame is shifted from individuals to “the social structure” (ibid:447). In so doing, researchers and practitioners, and perhaps eventually the people who compose the hierarchy themselves can avoid “diagnoses and interventions [that] rarely correspond with the context of suffering and may instead comply with the very structures of inequality producing the suffering in the first place” (ibid:447; Holmes 2006).

Epidemiology and biomedicine, on the other hand, tend to locate the source of disease from within rather than beyond the boundaries of the human body. Prevailing contemporary political, economic, and social policies and attitudes blame non-normative, othered individuals for their suffering and health problems. Holmes (2011) and other researchers studying structural violence and vulnerabilities urge us to “...train [our] gaze onto the social structures that produce and organize suffering” (426).

Syndemics and Chronicities

Another framework that accomplishes this in an interdisciplinary fashion is syndemics: “...synergistic interaction of diseases and social conditions at the biological and population levels” (Singer and Clair 2003:423). Singer and Clair (2003) mobilize the concept of syndemics to help researchers understand how the effects of many layers of disparity, vulnerability, and everyday violence produce co-morbidities, clusters of disease, or simultaneous chronic and acute diseases and illnesses. The focus is not just on diseases themselves, but on “[the] resultant excess [social, psychological, economic, environmental, and political] burden[s] of disease” (ibid). Manderson and Smith-Morris (2010) integrate the concept of chronicity with that of syndemics to critique the artificial binaries between acute and chronic diseases and to understand how the biological aspects of disease patterns are deeply connected to social processes and histories

(Kleinman et al. 1997). They observed that “Inequalities of all kinds...are compounded by disease and the experiences of chronic illness and disability” (ibid:15-16).

Syndemics, although not named explicitly, are evident in Dever’s (1991) work with migrant farmworkers. He described their health outcomes as “multiple and complex.” He observed patterns and combinations of chronic diseases and acute infections that “produce substantial disability” (14) amongst farmworkers and are compounded and exacerbated by: “...The delay in seeking care, unavailability of care, lack of access to care, potentially appalling working conditions, lack of perceived illness, transitory nature of farm work, and need to work at all costs in order to survive” (ibid).

Compared to other groups in the U.S. which rarely succumb to death by co-morbidities before the age of 64, the migrant farmworkers Dever researched and treated suffered and died from these conditions before their 60th birthdays (ibid:13). Dever’s work parallels anthropologist Cartwright’s (2011) research with migrant farmworkers in Montana. Observing that many studies on farmworker health focus narrowly on workplace conditions, Cartwright draws attention to “the larger toxic legal and social webs that define the quality of [immigrant farmworkers’] lives” (2011:480). The combined risks, dangers, and everyday injustices of the U.S. immigration system, under-enforced labor laws, and workplace conditions illustrate a syndemic pattern of poor health outcomes produced in part by “*harmful social conditions and injurious social connections*” (Singer and Clair 2003:429). Immigrants’ varying citizenship statuses produce varying syndemic health outcomes. The undocumented face the heightened risks of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, being warehoused in under-regulated private immigration detention centers, and eventual deportation, which “cause

a host of psychological, medical, financial, and legal problems within...immigrant families" (Cartwright 2011:491). Cartwright's continuum includes undocumented immigrants, undocumented lawful permanent residents (LPR/Green Card Holders), Naturalized U.S. Citizens, as well as mixed status families who face unique challenges under current immigration law. The laws that punish undocumented workers and jeopardize their health also punish their lawful family members and friends who suffer the horrendous consequences of detention and deportation as well (ibid:477). Thus, Cartwright concludes, "different immigration statuses create particular local biologies embedded in the structural violence of powerlessness and lost life potentials" (ibid:475).

The continua and frameworks encompassed within theories of structural violence and vulnerability help defer blame for illness and suffering from individual bodies and communities. They do so by contextualizing the lives of (im)migrant farmworkers in the histories of U.S. foreign and immigration policies, the *de jure* and *de facto* exclusions of immigrants from labor rights, the limited access to basic survival resources, including health care, public education, and social safety net protections, the instabilities of the global agricultural market, and the racist and discriminatory attitudes against immigrants who are scapegoated for causing economic and social insecurities that characterize life for many poor to middle income U.S. citizens and residents.

Notes on Methods and Ethics

I conducted ethnographic research and data collection for this dissertation from August 2010 through February 2012 in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys. During that time, I formally interviewed and engaged with 42 farmworkers and their families, and semi-formally interviewed or informally engaged with dozens more. The majority of these

formal interviews took place in farmworker households, or in restaurants, cafes, churches, community gardening plots, on car rides to clinic, court, and social service appointments, at parties and informal gatherings, and other places where people felt comfortable. I utilized a snowball sampling approach to find willing research participants, whom I refer to as *compañeros* throughout the remainder of this dissertation. I have replaced the real names of my *compañeros* with pseudonyms. Sometimes, the farmworkers wanted to chose their own fake names, and in other cases I chose. All other interviewees and organizational names, with the exceptions of politicians serving in public office, are also referred to by alternative names. In some cases, I changed some of the other identifiers, such as case-specific information, the Mexican states of origin of immigrants, and ethnicities in order to further guard against the ability of outsiders to identify *compañeros* and other participants.

Some reviewers of grant proposals that I submitted to the National Science Foundation and the Wenner Gren Foundation suggested that I would not be able to find willing research participants amongst severely marginalized farmworkers. Between 50 and 80 percent of farmworkers in the U.S. are undocumented (SPLC 2010:14; Wesler 2011; Cernansky 2012). The work performed by immigrant farmworkers is controlled by industries that capitalize on these and other vulnerabilities. While I did have limited opportunities to do participant observation on some commercial berry and vegetable farms, via asking the grower or foreman for permission to observe at a close distance, or through gleaning with the county food banks, I chose not to solicit interviews or ask personal questions to farmworkers on the farm. As Cooper et al. (2004:33) note in their

reflections on conducting community-based epidemiological research with migrant farmworkers in Texas:

Regardless of whether a research project is carried out in conjunction with an employer, workers' autonomy may be compromised if they feel any pressure either to participate or not to participate as a result of their employer's real or perceived opinion of the research. For this reason, recruitment at a farm or any other place connected to the farmworker's employment is ethically complicated. Voluntary consent may not be obtainable under these conditions. In our series of studies, recruitment that was conducted away from the worksite, in farmworkers' own homes or a nearby clinic, enhanced participation and minimized threats to the autonomy of potential participants.

To cultivate many of the relationships I developed with farmworkers and others, I visited and volunteered with several community organizations, affordable housing complexes, churches, and schools that served farmworker families in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys. Many organizations generously allowed me to volunteer and spend time at their sites, and often referred me to other community members or organizations that work directly with farmworkers. This take on the snowball sampling method allowed me to meet a very diverse group of farmworkers, including family members, indigenous Mexicans from the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michoacán, and men and women between the ages of 18 and 72. While not random or entirely representative, this sampling method is more appropriate for working with farmworker communities, who often lack formal addresses and listed telephone numbers that are sometimes used to facilitate the completion of random regional samples (Chávez et al. 2006:1018-1019; Sherman et al. 1997). Of the 42 formal interviews I completed, 19 were with women and 23 were with men. Only 3 of the men were single or unaccompanied, while almost half of the interviewees lived with their families or extended families in California's Central Coast. 15 families spoke indigenous languages, including Mixteco, Zapotec, Triqui, and Purépecha as well as varying amounts of Spanish. Some of their children were

trilingual, speaking their parents' indigenous language, Spanish, as well as English. The strong presence of indigenous farmworkers in California represented rates of immigration and settlement from very rural and socially, politically, and economically marginalized regions of Southwestern Mexico that had steadily increased up until recently (Passel et al. 2012). The remaining interviewee families spoke Spanish and came from the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Nayarit, and Colima: regions with historical connections to the Watsonville area and California in general via a long legacy of labor migration dating back to before the Bracero program. “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us” became a powerful chant during the immigration rights movements of the 21st century, emphasizing long legacies of border imperialism and patterns of labor migration between the U.S. and Mexico (D’Amato 2006:13).

At each community program, upon introducing myself in Spanish, I always explained my research project: its objectives, main questions, and the risks and benefits of participation. While fluent in Spanish upon arrival, I had to learn regional nuances in vocabulary, as much of the Spanish spoken in Mexico features many words derived from the Nahuatl language. I also had to make my language more accessible to a group of people with low rates of formal education and literacy: substituting words like *veneno* (poison) for technical words like *pesticide* or using folk words like *zacates* (weeds). This was particularly true when working with indigenous *compañeros* whose Spanish varied in degrees of fluency. Volunteering and participating in these organizations’ activities, as well as in anti-pesticide and immigrants’ rights activism, and making small talk allowed me to build rapport with farmworker families, gaining not only their trust, but also their respect for my level of engagement on issues the directly affecting their lives.

At these community venues, to recruit people for formal interviews, I passed around sign-up sheets as well as my bilingual double sided business cards. These featured my contact information and the familiar and inviting image of yellow *elotes* (corn) – a universal symbol of life for *campesinos* (peasants) in Mexico and Central America – instead of a more standard institutional print. Soon thereafter, I contacted those who signed up to participate in the research project directly by phone to arrange a house visit and interview. These interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours; in some cases, I would return for follow up questions, or would meet up and check in with folks less formally at their homes, or at community gatherings and events.

In one instance, my *compañera* Aniceta, whose story is retold in Chapter 3, contacted me after we met at community forum where she shared her experiences as an indigenous and recently disabled immigrant farmworker and mother. She expressed an eagerness and an urgency to connect amidst a very difficult time in her life during which she faced serious health problems, reams of complicated workers' compensation paperwork, the prospect of being permanently disabled and unemployed at 35, the inability to return home to her sick mother in Oaxaca without risking her own health and life, and an unsupportive husband.

Certainly, not all farmworkers I presented my project to wanted to participate, and there were times when I observed a generalized distrust of my presence. In some households, I was never invited inside; instead, our interviews or interactions took place elsewhere. However, many participants and observers of my efforts and work respected and admired my status as a student. Some expressed genuine amazement that I had driven my car, alone as a single woman, over 3,000 miles from the East Coast to live

and work in the Watsonville area. We bonded over our respective yet sharply different migrations by tracing our fingers over the cities and states and highways in my road map atlas.

My involvement with the Center for Farmworker Families and Migrant Education District XI included countless hours of service with farmworkers. I provided rides to and from school or other appointments, and also organized events like free markets and educational programming in collaboration with other community groups, like the Watsonville Brown Berets: a group of young Mexican and Mexican Americans between the ages of twelve and thirty dedicated to organizing for their community in the Pájaro Valley and providing alternatives to gang violence. Never was the receipt of help contingent upon participating in an interview with me. At first, going through a lot of the social service and health care loopholes together with *compañeros* gave me first hand knowledge of the difficulties farmworkers face in accessing basic survival resources and help. However, over time, it grew very time consuming and emotionally draining, and I made a methodological decision to shift from service to gift-based reciprocity. This entailed \$20 cash stipends sometimes accompanied by a small meal or a coffee. I also carried a box of toys with me to every interview or household visit to thank children for behaving while their parents and I talked. This enabled me to develop trust with farmworker families *as a whole* and prevented me from analyzing farmworkers' social suffering in isolation from their family units.⁵ All of these efforts were essential for building rapport, as well as gaining the respect of a community that is justifiably hesitant to interact with non-familiar outsiders.

5. In one instance, this method failed to facilitate an interview; a *compañera's* three daughters proceeded to fill their small shared bedroom with inflated balloons much to the amusement of other children and housemates.

Studying Up to Study Down

Laura Nader made the original call for anthropologists to challenge their own tendencies to study those with less power in order to understand how the philosophies and practices of elites shaped the lives of the marginalized (1972). She urged anthropologists to release themselves from the false standard of complete objectivity. To produce the richest and most relevant ethnographies requires us to study phenomena that evoke emotions (ibid) and to mobilize our findings in response. Nader anticipated heightened peer critique and accusations that ethnographies that studied up could not be authentic to the discipline of anthropology. She also identified a number of ethical and practical dilemmas to anthropologists from outside of the academy since elites of the private and public sectors (corporate and state) tend to protect themselves from non-familials (outsiders). Researchers had to think about the ethical consequences of covert research. Elites and people in positions of power and authority often lack enthusiasm when it comes to becoming a participant in a research project; even those below the most powerful can be difficult to access. Just as with the powerless, anthropologists had to maintain the same levels of concern with respect to the risks faced by elites who participated in anthropological research including subsequent loss of employment and consequent deterioration of wellbeing.

These issues can also affect the welfare of the anthropologists conducting the research even when a project is conducted in the name of social justice. Steve Striffler, upon the publication of the book *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (2005), nearly lost his job at the University of Arkansas. He did participant observation at a Tyson chicken processing plant without the company's knowledge. Tyson had a close financial and academic relationship with Striffler's home institution.

His work provoked questions about whether or not corporations and institutions merited the same ethical treatment as individual human beings; a question that reverberates into contemporary debates about the legal consequences of granting corporations and businesses the rights of personhood.

Twenty years following Nader's call to "reinvent" the possibilities of anthropological inquiry, Gusterson (1997) emphasized the continued importance of studying the structures of corporate and state power and the unique challenges of studying up for anthropologists. As he noted during his fieldwork with nuclear research staff in California, he struggled with how to proceed having been granted Institutional Review Board approval but not company access to the laboratory. "[Participant observation] does not travel well up the social structure" (ibid:115). Furthermore, elites consider their time to be very valuable, and not all are willing to dedicate their time to a social science researcher, let alone give them the time of day.

During my field work, I relied on socializing informally (Gusterson 1997) to engage in discussions with higher ranked agribusiness personnel and elites. While gleaning for the food bank or following city hall or county board of supervisors meetings, I would occasionally strike up conversations with growers, supervisors, harvest managers, lobbyists, industry hired guns, and politicians. I also attended conferences geared towards growers and agribusiness personnel (human resources staff, foreman, supervisors, insurance and risk management specialists, and pesticide applicators), which provided many opportunities to socialize informally as well as chances for asking open ended questions or to make comments that invoked prolonged dialogues during panels. In some instances, this provoked other audience members to speak and share

their experiences or perceptions. I had permission to observe and participate at these private events and always presented myself as a researcher interested in the relationships between agribusiness practices and farmworker health.

Gleaning agricultural produce for the food bank during the first several months of field work allowed me, if only briefly, to practice farm work. This was often the only direct access I had to fields, where I could also observe, sometimes up close and sometimes from a distance, the pace and intensity of farm work. Gleaning and driving my car along highways cutting across many hundreds of miles of agricultural fields gave me a deeper understanding of the political economy and ecology of California agriculture and farm work: on the job, at home, and in all the spaces in between, from clinics and schools, to regional corporate headquarters and professional agricultural industry lobbying offices located far from the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys.

The battle over the use of methyl iodide – a toxic fumigant pesticide used to sterilize the soil before planting crops – in agriculture peaked while I was in the field between 2010 and 2012. I had the opportunity to participate in the movement against synthetic soil fumigants after being invited to by the local teachers union and two groups of Latino youth: some public high school students in search of community service credits and better workplace protections and conditions for their parents, and the Watsonville Brown Berets. I contributed my skills as a writer, researcher, and educator to the cause. My role as an anthropologist in the campaign against methyl iodide helped me to see the dynamics between on-the-farm and off-the-farm agricultural industry power that all impacted the health and wellbeing of farmworkers, rural residents, and

their families. It also gave me access to agricultural lobbyists, governmental officials, and others who are charged with representing the interests of agribusinesses.

This is something I may not have chosen to do during field work had I not been asked by these brave and bright educators and youth who took the initiative to make the connections between their everyday lives, struggles and surroundings. They taught me a lot about the political ecology of the Pájaro Valley without necessarily understanding what this anthropological term means, nor the details of the theories it entails. Instead, they live it. The link to education in this rural community is especially significant, given the history of anti-pesticide activism in the Pájaro Valley (EWG 1997), due to the observations and conclusions that teachers and students come to regarding their health and welfare with respect to many rural schools' proximities to sprayed and fumigated fields. One third of the elementary, middle, and high schools (as well as some charter and private schools) in the Pájaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) neighbor conventional farm fields; the situation is similar in the Salinas Valley (Steinberg and Steinberg 2008a, 2008b). A significant proportion of the student body within the PVUSD are the children of farmworkers and other employees of agriculture including pesticide applicators, food processing plant workers, farm managers and supervisors, and growers.

Some anthropologists would argue that aligning oneself politically and socially so early on in field work would limit my access to proponents of pesticides and growers, in addition to corrupting my objectivity. However, I found that it actually produced a number of ethnographically rich opportunities and exchanges that enhanced and complicated my understandings of growers and agribusinesses and how institutional

cultures shape farmworker health. My experiences as an activist-anthropologist-researcher working in the service of local youth, teachers, and their parents allowed me to develop close bonds with those directly experiencing pesticide exposure. It also allowed me to witness the goings on at other levels of the agricultural hierarchy more directly than I would have by limiting myself to farm fields. I did not have much success in soliciting formal interviews with growers or their representatives and a few times, my requests to sit in on agricultural meetings or presentations geared towards city, county, or state officials and business representatives were regularly denied. Sometimes, sympathetic local politicians would share their notes and insights with me from these agribusiness sponsored events. More often, the opponents and proponents of pesticides, and methyl iodide more specifically, crossed paths in Watsonville City Hall, at County Board of Supervisors meetings in Santa Cruz and Monterey, at lobbying days in Sacramento, at public demonstrations throughout the state of California, and at special community forums dedicated to this issue. These “political conflicts” (Harrison 2011:1) surrounding methyl iodide provided some of my most rewarding fieldwork opportunities and also enhanced my development as a public anthropologist.

Studying Institutional Cultures

The methodological approaches to studying up outlined above facilitated my understandings of the institutional culture of agribusiness, which in turn informed my analysis of the varying layers of vulnerability and disparity affecting farmworker health outcomes. Both Holmes (2007, 2011, 2013) and Benson (2008a, 2008b) see growers and farmworkers both as victims of a market system that renders both their lives and livelihoods disposable. They are both vulnerable subjects, albeit in uneven and unequal ways. The precariousness of farming and farm working is influenced by the

unpredictability of crop outcomes due to climate or pest problems, the uncertainties and dangers inherent to crossing the U.S.-Mexico border every year to return to work at the start of the harvesting seasons, and the fluctuations of market prices and demands for certain kinds of fruits and vegetables. Yet rarely do growers and farmworkers unite around the common causes of their vulnerability. Understanding the inequalities inherent to agribusiness by studying agricultural corporations as institutional cultures, rather than focusing exclusively on the cultures of farmworkers, is imperative to understanding how social distance and economic inequality is maintained and justified.

Smith-Nonini (2011), drawing on Beck (1996), and Gledhill (1998) sees the lack of meaningful and effective corporate responsibility for the suffering of impoverished, immigrant, ethnic others as purposefully built into systems of structural violence and vulnerability.

...In the neoliberal business world of the past two decades...corporate actors such as insurance companies, medical providers, and food processors [and I would add agribusinesses] have developed entire divisions centered around risk management, avoidance, and diversion. Although a US company may hire undocumented workers, it remains liable under the law for workers injured in a dangerous workplace. And so a shell game has evolved to keep workers ignorant about their rights and maintain a level of plausible deniability and invisibility for 'illegal' injured bodies The flexibility that migrant labor provides to agribusiness – the migrants' convenient willingness to show up when needed and disappear at the end of the season – is grounded in a substrate of torn muscles, alcoholism, tuberculosis, and heat stroke. It is not incidental that these corporations have long-held status as 'legal persons' in the United States, enjoying extraordinary rights to influence political policy...while their immigrant employees are nonpersons. (461, 465)

Corporations are aided and abetted in these processes of appropriating labor for their various enterprises by a slew of academics, private consultants, trade and commodity groups, international debt financiers like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, business representatives, and government agencies and actors. This

combination of so-called expert actors developed and implemented the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other free trade agreements throughout the Americas in the name of continental or hemispheric economic growth and development (López 2008). However, the purpose was not principally to produce economic growth and development. These “experts” engineered NAFTA to reinvigorate the U.S. economy through the provision of cheap, vulnerable, flexible, and disposable labor: human beings who had been and continue to be purposefully displaced from their rural and urban lives and livelihoods in Mexico and Central America. Smith-Nonini characterizes this “as a capitalist strategy”: “a collection of state-abetted, proactive, political policies lobbied for by corporate actors and elites” (2011:464).

There are parallels and deeply embedded connections between the capitalist appropriation of the labor of immigrant others in the production of food and the free market design of the U.S. health care system. These systems feature many nodes of exclusion, including purposeful distance from structural diagnoses of health problems among the most marginalized and vulnerable patients. McKenna (2012) researched an unsuccessful effort to incorporate community engagement and input into the medical school curriculum at a large university hospital. This grant-funded program sought to introduce students and medical doctors on staff as faculty and clinicians to the structural (e.g., social, environmental, political, economic) barriers to health. As noted previously with respect to the focus of biomedicine, traditionally, “...Medical education focuses on the diseased body, not the body politic” (McKenna 2012:96; Smith-Nonini 2010). The failure of the program to reach full implementation resulted in part from strong resistance from the medical student body and faculty. They viewed the involuntary

incorporation of community-based agendas into their studies as interfering with their professional objectives to receive appropriate and relevant medical education.

McKenna's ethnography of a medical school represents one of many examples in which the authority and power of biomedical knowledge and practice is privileged over the community's needs or ideas about the origins of their illnesses, diseases, and social suffering. Similarly, the implementation of NAFTA took place with absolutely no input from the farming communities it was designed to affect (López 2008:6; Kingsolver 1996).

Anthropological studies of structural violence and vulnerabilities demonstrate the urgent need for research that studies the "cultures" embedded within institutions and policies that shape life and health in ways that are beyond individual control. These institutions include academic disciplines like epidemiology, biomedicine, business, and the social sciences. They also include industries, lobbies, political decision makers and processes, as well as businesses and corporations, and all of the places where they intersect and bolster one another. All feature unique as well as shared attributes that are bound by the priorities of profit making. This dissertation represents an effort to connect farmworker community health to the social, political, economic, and ecological dominance of the California agricultural industry: its various actors and participants along with complementary industries and lobbies with their powerful spheres and arms of influence, domination, and control.

In addition to interviews and less formal interactions and observations with farmworkers, I also formally interviewed or informally engaged with and observed over 100 other people who either work directly with farmworkers or whose work has direct or

indirect impacts on the lives of farmworkers. These individuals included: farmers and growers (14), agricultural organization representatives and grower-shipper company personnel (27), farm foremen and supervisors (5), politicians (14), lawyers (6), lobbyists (7), medical doctors (5), a dentist (1), social service providers including many non-profit directors (51), farm foremen and supervisors (5), paid community organizers (8), unpaid community activists and organizers (30), Pájaro Valley Unified School District school board members (6), school district employees (5), administrators (2), teachers and teachers' union leadership (17), other union organizers (10), and researchers from the social, agricultural, and health sciences (26).

In many cases these different groups of people intersected or overlapped in different areas of employment or community involvement, thus making these listed categories very fluid. For example, one of the lawyers I observed in action at County Board of Supervisor meetings in Monterey County, Mr. Gilles, came from a grower shipper family and still had economic and social ties to the industry in addition to representing their interests as an attorney. Many of the unpaid community activists attended local high schools or colleges and grew up in farmworker families. Some of the researchers did projects in collaboration with agribusinesses: to develop pesticides or non-toxic pest control methods or to evaluate occupational safety and employee wellness programs. Other researchers worked closely with community activists to strengthen their claims against the use of some of the most toxic pesticides near schools and rural residences. Some non-profit directors had their start as strawberry pickers in the 1960s and 70s. And several non-profits had direct or indirect ties to

agribusinesses either through the receipt of funding, or through the placement of agribusiness personnel on their Boards of Trustees and advisory committees.

In order to document the range of structural violence and vulnerabilities faced by farmworker families, I needed to conduct participant observation in farmworker households and communities, as well as in locations seemingly far removed from the farm or the community. For instance, to better understand the factors that shape injured workers' lived experiences of neglect and high rates of observed permanent disability, I explored not just the embodiment of occupational injuries by farmworkers. I also interrogated and observed the structures and dynamics of legal practice, changing policies, and the power of the insurance industries and their relationships to agribusinesses. I attended agricultural safety conferences where insurance representatives and human resources personnel received training on how to handle workers' compensation claims. I interviewed lawyers who specialized in working with injured workers; those with offices in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys inevitably ended up serving hundreds of farmworkers every year.

In order to understand why farmworkers had such different opinions about the ways pesticides shaped their lives, I had to listen deeply not only to farmworkers but to agricultural extension agents, plant scientists, growers, and industry lobbyists. Participating actively in the campaign against the toxic soil fumigant methyl iodide presented me with opportunities to travel up and down the agribusiness and agrichemical hierarchy. By ethnographically engaging in these different yet interconnected contexts, I could zoom in and out, on and off the farm (Holmes 2011), in order to analyze the many structures that produce injury and harm, as well as the social

distance between farmworkers and all of the different actors who have varying degrees of control over farmworkers' lives. I used a similar approach while studying farmworkers' experiences with state and social services and agribusinesses' development of their own philanthropic and corporate social responsibility projects in a similar fashion.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation documents, analyzes, and critically interrogates some of the structures that induce everyday violence, vulnerabilities, and disparities in the lives of Central Coast (im)migrant farmworkers. In Chapter 2, I describe the political ecology of the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys and the effects of the overwhelming economic dependence of agribusinesses on toxic pesticides are having on farmworker health in both visible and invisible ways. Pesticide exposure and the politics and economic models that facilitate and justify toxic trespasses in the lives of rural, impoverished communities of color are one of many layers of vulnerability faced by farmworker families both on the farm through occupational exposure and off the farm as the boundaries of the fields and homes, schools, and places of play and recreation converge with devastating consequences. Many (but not all) in the agricultural industry--including growers, chemical companies, University of California researchers and cooperative extension agents--are firmly entrenched in systems of prescribed pest control protocols. Some farmworkers have adopted these positivist ideologies into their own conceptualizations of community and personal economic and social wellbeing. Other farmworkers, farmers, and community members like teachers and students, relying on their embodied experiences with routine toxic agrochemical exposure, countered dominant industry-sponsored narratives that emphasized the safety and

harmlessness of agrochemicals when used as directed. This enables the contestation of pesticide related illnesses, diseases, and disabilities both from outside and from within farmworker communities. At the same time, farmworkers' and community members' embodied experiences, uncertainties, and anxieties about pesticide exposure proved to be powerful points of resistance against the continued intrusion of toxic chemicals in everyday life, leading to the retraction of the registration of one especially toxic soil fumigant: methyl iodide.

In Chapter 3, I explore farmworkers' struggles with occupational injuries, which are compounded by other vulnerabilities and disparities. Farmworker injuries rarely exist in isolation, often manifesting as syndemics. These may include chronic diseases that manifest as a result of major life changes post injury, such as diabetes and diminished mental health. The chronicities of injuries and suffering are also explored as injured workers leave and enter the workforce over time, and age with the added burdens of disabilities and chronic diseases. All of these factors affect not only the injured worker, but the entire farmworker family household as well as extended family networks bi-nationally. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations. California has progressive policies on the books with respect to including agriculture and farmworkers under workplace safety regulations and workers' compensation coverage. However, there are a number of *de facto* and *de jure* barriers, contradictions, and processes that prevent farmworkers from receiving the quality and amount of care that would enable them to heal more completely and or adapt more appropriately to life post injury. Undercounting of injured workers by government agencies and by industries enables continued neglect as does a system that places blame for suffering on the injured

worker and is structured around fraud reduction and cost cutting for businesses: not justice for workers.

Chapter 4 explores how social suffering is not always alleviated by the array of state, county, and non-profit services that purport to serve farmworkers and their families. Each program – with focuses ranging from housing, education, banking, pesticide safety, labor protection and advocacy, legal assistance, women’s issues, health care, law enforcement, immigration, food and nutrition, and child care and welfare – represents the many layers of vulnerability in the lives of farmworkers. Programs are organized in a piecemeal fashion that prevent broad understandings of how different vulnerabilities intersect and interact with one another in farmworkers lives, sometimes rendering one organization’s intervention null or less effective. Vulnerabilities are produced on the farm through agribusiness control of the structure, pace, and conditions of work. They are also produced and exacerbated in off-the-farm contexts via agribusiness participation in state policy making and non-profit financing, organizational development, and management. The chapter dispels myths that assume that farmworkers have access to a wealth of free services, and discusses the realities of farmworkers’ experiences with affordable housing, child care, health care, social services, and public education.

In Chapter 5, I analyze and interrogate the emergence of agribusiness sponsored and developed programs, philanthropic endeavors, and interventions that attempt to address farmworker education, welfare, and health. While this funding and support is keeping some essential services for farmworkers afloat, such organizations and the aid they provide also serve as a subsidy to agribusinesses who are exempt from providing

many basic protections and benefits to their employees. Some celebrate the involvement of agribusiness representatives and funding as fostering inter-community and multi-stakeholder efforts to address serious problems in the community. However, throughout my fieldwork, it became difficult to ignore the dual roles of agribusiness in co-producing both the conditions of farmworker social suffering and vulnerability and in suggesting and implementing solutions to these same problems. I analyze contradictions embedded within these business-community partnerships by exploring agribusinesses' relationships with the food bank, public schools and migrant education, and the development of company-sponsored employee wellness programs and a clinic. Such fiscal and social sponsorships may keep vital services afloat and fill in voids left by state retraction of resources or political exclusions of undocumented workers. However, the direct and indirect involvement of agribusinesses in the production of problems and solutions also severely limits the politics of the possible with respect to moving beyond dependence on trickle down profits to address deeply embedded systemic disparities for (im)migrant farmworkers.

To conclude, in Chapter 6 I explore alternative, non-capitalist solutions that can work towards fostering trans-worker solidarity and respect while ensuring that everyone's basic health and survival needs are met while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of agriculture on California's Central Coast.

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PESTICIDES AND THE NEGATION OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUFFERING

On a cool and windy day in October 2010, some friends and I joined a local non-profit organization to pick romaine lettuce – unmarketable, but still edible – for the county food bank. A pesticide applicator dressed in a white disposable suit and respirator rode a tractor spraying fields of strawberries. It could have been a fungicide, applied in a fine mist to kill the powdery mildew that settles onto the foliage and fruit amidst the heavy ocean fog. The morning fog and afternoon sun, which insulates the berries from prolonged sun scorch but provides the right amount of warmth to encourage lots of flowers to bloom and fruit over the sixth month growing cycle. This combination of weather patterns makes the Central Coast both a perfect and challenging place to grow strawberries and other cool-weather loving crops (Gareau 2008:108). It could also have been an insecticide. USDA scientists identify a total of 54 pesticide residues found on strawberries alone, many of which are “known or probably carcinogens...suspected hormone disruptors...neurotoxins...[and/or] developmental or reproductive toxins” (PANNA 2010).

Nearby, another crew took part in securing plastic tarps meant to seal in soil fumigants. These expansive (and expensive) rolls of plastic are referred to in industry speak as ‘virtually impermeable film’. They are designed to keep the pest-killing gases and liquid vapors in, improving their effectiveness and supposedly reducing drift. While the man driving the tractor wore personal protective equipment, including a white suit and a respirator, the crew members, whose job it is to secure the plastic by using a red-

colored adhesive and then shoveling dirt along the edges to seal in the gas, did not, nor are they legally required to.

It is not uncommon to see these tarps come loose, flapping in the breeze, mimicking the intense ocean waves of the Pacific Ocean a few miles to the west that attract dare-devil surfers to the region year round. Tourism is the other major economic driver in the region. Given the frequency with which I and others observe loose tarps, drift is way more commonplace than the pesticide applicators and agricultural industry representatives would like to publicly admit. Residents of the Pájaro Valley have been trying to address the problem of drift and unintentional exposure at least since the UFW started organizing against pesticides in the 1960s (Pulido 1996; Bardacke 2011). However, in many instances, the health and ecological risks posed by pesticides circulating in and just beyond the fields are denied altogether.

Not too far off in the distance, I stopped picking for a bit as I heard a loud buzzing sound overhead. I looked up to see a helicopter circling, with a set of sprayer attachments. Helicopters have replaced airplanes on the Central Coast as the preferred method of aerial spraying. Their operators, sealed in a special glass bubble, can spray crops with greater precision and less waste than the awkward little airplanes still used to spray orange groves and other crops in the Central Valley. I often watched these helicopters in action while driving down Highway 101, which runs north-south, parallel to the Salinas River. The helicopters dove and hovered as close to the ground as possible, making sharp turns to cover all the rows with a fine spray of insecticide.

Unnerved, I pulled my yellow bandana over my face, knowing that it wouldn't do much in terms of keeping any pesticide drift out of my lungs: that would require a very

special and expensive respirator, and even this high tech personal protective equipment works imperfectly. Still, I felt an urge to follow the lead of the men and women across the irrigation ditch, for whom these pieces of cloth serve as make-shift, do-it-yourself protective gear.

According to the Department of Pesticide Regulation's rules, field workers must be notified by growers when pesticides are being applied or will be applied within one quarter mile of their worksite. Growers are also required to inform farmworkers of the "restricted entry interval" (REI): a period of time set by the DPR after which it is deemed safe to re-enter a recently sprayed field. Reentry times vary depending on the kind of pesticide applied or if more than one pesticide is used and are based on the rate at which chemicals dissipate (to the extent that they do). For instance, the REI for RoundUp, a name brand herbicide, is four hours, while soil fumigants, like methyl bromide and chloropicrin have an REI between 2 and 14 days (depending on the method of application used) (UC IPM Online 2009; CA DPR 2007, 2010). These notices can be given orally and or in writing on a bulletin board near the worksite and on small red and white signs with bold bilingual *danger/peligro* warnings and skulls and crossbones posted at the corners of the fields that have been sprayed. The bulletin boards are also where employers post general employment rights, and other workplace safety information, almost always in very fine print. Typically, a spreadsheet is filled out manually on site when pesticides are applied, featuring the pesticide name, and the date, time, location of the application, and the REI. Workers may also be provided with personal protective equipment following some applications, again depending on the type of pesticide. They are supposed to receive trainings about pesticide safety and to

learn how to recognize and treat pesticide exposure symptoms. Sometimes, specific information about the pesticides that have been or are being applied at work is also provided by employers (CA DPR 2010).

Responses from farmworker *compañeros* indicate that these practices and rules are not consistently enforced. Furthermore, when simply posted or presented in writing, it is less likely that farmworkers will be able to access this information as literacy levels are mixed amongst farmworkers who possess varying levels of formal education. There are also a lot of farmworkers who speak indigenous languages that cannot be easily translated into writing. Not all farmworkers I interviewed knew exactly what they had been exposed to, but they did express concerns about their routine acute symptoms: rashes, itchy watery eyes and nose, headaches, dizziness, blurry vision, and fatigue. Whenever I saw a crew working in one field and a sprayer overhead applying pesticides to an adjacent field, my first thoughts were that this practice must be illegal; it depends on the pesticide and how the DPR and the EPA evaluate said pesticide's safety with respect to worker or bystander exposure. That evaluation process, as I will explain later on, is very flawed.

Later, I come to understand that these conditions, ones that I am judging to be risky and questionable, are deemed safe, routine, and necessary by agribusinesses and by proxy, the state. Pesticides helped secure national and global food security. They protected consumers from dangerous molds and mildews that threaten food safety. They allowed growers to produce more food per acre which mitigated their market risks in the event of a crop failure. They enabled food to be affordable to consumers. I heard these and other ideas voiced by many growers, grower advocates and agricultural

industry employees: at conferences, in lobbying firms, at anti-pesticide protests and public hearings. I even heard these refrains voiced by some farmworkers who have adopted their employers' world views about the necessity of pesticides to produce high yields.

There are a number of likely and well-documented connections between the everyday and slow poisoning of rural environments and people and the quality of life and health of farmworkers, their families, and other rural residents (Harrison 2011; Wright 1990; López 2008; Reeves et al. 2002; Mascareñas 2011). However, they are highly contested by the agricultural and agrochemical industries and sometimes by farm workers themselves via relationships and processes that take place both on and off the farm. As of this writing, there was no official cancer or birth defect count amongst farmworkers. When I called the Santa Cruz County epidemiologist, he informed that the Department of health did not aggregate health data by region or occupation and that to do such a study would be nearly impossible or would require a multi-million dollar grant for the National Institutes of Health. Even then, if I wanted to focus on farmworkers, he asked, how would I be able to know for certain that cancer, birth defect, and neurological clusters, for example, correlated directly with pesticide exposure? There were too many variables at play compounded by the geographic mobility of farmworkers. However, some communities are creating their own research questions, designs, and methodologies to address their concerns about assaults to public health and the environment (Corburn 2005; Ellis and Bilbao 2013; Goldman Prize 2012).

In California, this is nothing new. A long history of pesticides reveals over a century of struggles that started well before Rachel Carson was able to mobilize a

critical mass through her work as a public scholar and ecologist (Carson 1962; McWilliams 2008; Nash 2006; Pulido 1996; Whorton 1974). Pesticides have been institutionalized (Philpott 2012; van den Bosch 1978), globalized (Weir and Schapiro 1981), and have locally specific consequences for the Central Coast and other agricultural regions (EWG 1997; Harrison 2011; Kent-Monning 2010). However, farmworkers and rural residents have different ideas about pesticides that are based in embodied knowledge, lived experiences as well as their many layered vulnerabilities – not risk assessments, state and private testing, and public relations exercises.

This chapter will explore the micro- and macro-politics of pesticide-related risks and contested illnesses in the context of the struggle against methyl iodide: a highly toxic and carcinogenic soil fumigant used to sterilize the soil before high value crops like strawberries, lettuce, raspberries, and tomatoes are planted. I open this chapter with a story from Gerardo, an aging retired farmworker who suspects that his health has been affected by an exposure to organophosphate pesticides. I will then demonstrate how farmworkers' ideas about pesticides and their health are contested both within households and farmworker communities and by state and industry. These insights demonstrate the complexities of different people's attitudes about pesticides, and how they are shaped by context, one's position in the agroindustrial hierarchy (Pulido 1996), and in the case of farmworkers, many layers of vulnerabilities.

Suspicion: A Farmworker Contemplates the Origins of his Parkinson's Disease

Early on in my fieldwork, the applied work of community organizing combined with my observations about pesticide use in the Pájaro and Salinas Valley's became a priority. This was in part as a result of my shock at what I was seeing in the fields, even

from a distance, and hearing from farmworker *compañeras* about how bad things still are, despite a slew of laws and protections. Classic 20th century works focused on farmworkers, ranging from Carey McWilliam's *Factories in the Field*, (1966 [1935]) to Steinbeck's many novels detailing the lives and struggles of California farmworkers, are still widely referenced. There is a tendency in anthropology to always look for what is new, to focus ethnographic energies on how things are changing. This may distract us from the important significance of that which does not change, or at least not very dramatically over the course of a century.

Different groups have come into and out of farm work over the past 100 years. Different chemicals have been applied to crops and unceremoniously retired only to be replaced by new pesticides. But the structure of California agribusiness, while more consolidated than it used to be, enhanced by new technologies, and featuring new cohorts of migrants organized in stringent labor hierarchies, have not changed much. The significance of all of this is a legacy of economically, socially, and ecologically harmful practices that take an overall hidden and highly contested toll on farmworkers' lives.

My friend Luz had lived in Watsonville for decades. In the 1970s, he became a champion and key local organizer for the UFW. Later, he endured the earthquake of 1989, the cannery strikes of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and had worked in the strawberry fields for almost 30 years. Luz recently shifted to construction work and his wife, Lucinda, started working in a unionized lettuce packing plant. They have long struggled to cobble together a living for their family of five children. The couple followed the political situation in their home country, Mexico with great fervor and shared a

passion for social justice both back home and in their host community, the Pájaro Valley.

Luz had been impressed with my involvement in the campaign against methyl iodide, and sent me an email asking me if I could help him do some research on pesticides used in the strawberry industry during the 1980s. Later, he specified that this would be on behalf of his older brother, Gerardo, who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease only a year earlier. Both brothers wanted to know if there might be a connection between Gerardo's illness and a series of pesticide exposures that took place on a small commercial strawberry farm 30 years ago.

Hidalgo Farm started in the 1970s when the family patriarch, Carmelo Hidalgo, made the transition from bracero program farmworker, to sharecropper, to farm owner: a process typical of many Mexican and Mexican American strawberry growers described by Wells (1996). Fewer of the Mexican-owned farmers survived on account of the competition with White and Japanese strawberry farmers, who had more experience growing strawberries, easier access to loans and credit, better parcels of land, and higher levels of formal education (ibid). Now, 2nd and 3rd generations of Latinos who have followed their grandparents and parents into the strawberry business predominate in the Pájaro Valley, supplying major grower-shipper companies under annual contract agreements. By 2012, Hidalgo Farm continued to operate under the management of Carmelo's two sons. They, like many of their counterparts in the industry, sold their fruit under contract to a larger grower-shipper company. Their wives helped with the marketing and human resources management aspects of the farm's operation, reiterating the gendered division of labor in California agriculture. Latinos now own

and/or operate more strawberry farms in California than any other ethnic group (AP 2012).

In the 1970s and 80s, most of the employees contracted by Carmelo came from the same small *rancho* (a village on the outskirts of a larger *pueblo*, or town) in Jalisco, Mexico. Luz and Gerardo's father and their eleven older siblings worked the family farm, harvesting corn, beans, and some squash in the traditional poly-cultural way: each plant supporting and sustaining one another and providing complementary proteins and nutrients to peasant farmers that would be supplemented with tomatoes, farm raised meats and eggs, and wild fruit.

As Luz explained to me, there was little need for pesticides until the need was created. One year, facing pressure from peers and seed and chemical marketers, Luz's father tried growing a new hybrid variety of corn that required the use of a pesticide called esteron-47: a moderately toxic herbicide manufactured and marketed by the Mexican branch of Dow AgroSciences. Prior to this shift, Luz explains that the shade of the squash plants kept most of the weeds down, and there was no need for pesticides on the family farm.

Several years after the family transitioned to hybrid corn and pesticide-dependent agriculture, Luz and Gerardo's father passed away at the young age of 54. This in part instigated the younger siblings to migrate (without papers) to find work to support their mother and other family members. The way Luz describes it, "I came to the U.S. to buy a tractor [for the family farm] and never left." Four of Luz' siblings also migrated to the U.S. in the 1970s to find work to support their families. The rest remained in Mexico. A

few passed away at very young ages (40s-50s). They became naturalized under the 1986 immigration reform and are now U.S. citizens.

The brothers lived only a few streets away from one another in Watsonville. Luz and I pulled into the driveway, which featured the makings of a wooden ramp under construction. Gerardo's wife Claudia opened the door for us and urged us to take a seat. To my left, a bedroom door is plastered with a poster made by the couple's 14 year old granddaughter, Teresa. It read, "*Tarea: haga tus ejercicios*" (Homework: do your exercises) and reminded a reluctant Gerardo to do his physical therapy routines so that he would continue to regain strength and maintain mobility on his left side. There was tension in the air as Luz explained to Claudia the purpose of our visit: to talk with Gerardo about his days working for Hidalgo as a pesticide applicator and field worker and to see if I (the researcher) can find any links between his exposure and his Parkinson's disease.

Claudia, frowning, proclaimed, "Well, that's what *he* thinks, but he can't *know* that" with regards to her husband's illness theory. She was concerned that bringing up the past might aggravate her husband's nerves and anger and exacerbate his condition: something the doctors advised Gerardo to avoid, if he can. It seemed like an impossible task given that a man who spent most of his life active and working, a man who takes pride in the fact that he not only bought his family's house but also built all of the cabinetry inside, is now resigned to the slow deterioration of a degenerative nerve and brain disease. Still, the two brothers broke into a hearty laughter throughout our visit, reminiscing about Mexico, making political jokes, and *chismeando* (gossiping) about old acquaintances.

Claudia also did not want to create problems with Gerardo's former co-workers and employer: even though Hidalgo Sr. has long since passed away of the same pancreatic cancer that claimed at least three of Gerardo's workmates. She and others in their migrant cohort remained loyal to the Hidalgos for giving them a chance at life and work in California. I tried to reassure her, explaining that what Gerardo thought had merit. "Yes, this is what he believes" (*Éste es lo que él cree*), she asserted, reemphasizing her own disbelief.

After some bickering with Claudia, who left the combined dining-living-kitchen room in a huff, Gerardo eagerly recounted what happened to him. The brothers joked about Claudia's stubbornness, explaining that she can be especially demanding and overbearing sometimes. But in some respects, Claudia's skepticism and stubbornness around her husband's theory that he was poisoned by pesticides is not uncommon in farmworker households. The disbelief persisted amongst other members of his community. His doctors did not fully support his theories about his illness either, or at least they said that they could not be certain. They have concluded that his nerves have simply degenerated as a consequence of a nervous disorder (anxiety and depression). This is similar to what Nancy Scheper-Hughes observed in Brazil (1992). Biomedical practitioners interpreted the sugarcane workers' *nervoso* (Portuguese, in Spanish, *nervios*) as deficient mental health. Sugarcane workers used the word to describe their holistic state of being: an expression of the connections between the health of mind, body, and spirit. Health problems of social origin are transformed into personal, individual problems that can be solved medically.

There are truths within both the uncertainties and Gerardo's theories. Not knowing enables growers and agrichemical manufactures to continue using pesticides and to negate their employees' and neighbors' concerns. Not knowing is built into the scientific method used by the U.S. EPA and the CA DPR to determine the environmental and body burden thresholds that govern how different pesticides can be used and how much of each can be applied and under what conditions.

Gerardo remembered waking up on a Sunday unable to move after six days and sixty full hours of spraying pesticides with the hose. He called in sick, but this angered Sr. Hidalgo, who told him never to come back. Luz asked Gerardo if they wore any protection: "*Pues, sí, un pañuelo por la cara*" (Well, yeah, a handkerchief over the mouth), which elicited quite the cacophony of laughter as they both knew how little good a piece of cloth would do to protect a worker from exposure: through the lungs, mouth, and skin. Crew members also wore fabric coveralls, rubber boots, and leather gloves: none of which are adequate to protect the skin or respiratory tract from organophosphate exposure. Personal protective equipment has improved greatly over the past few decades, as one sympathetic cooperative extension agent pointed out to me. However, it is only effective if it is worn properly and regularly. Even then, there are still things that can and do go wrong.

Before they could be officially fired, Gerardo and his wife quickly found strawberry harvesting work in Salinas for a larger commercial grower. Some of their coworkers left, while others stayed with the Hidalgos out of loyalty. This loyalty is rooted in the connections the workers and their employer shared being from the same community in Mexico, and is due to the fact that the Hidalgo family had created work

opportunities and occasionally provided special assistance and aid for their *paisanos* (fellow countrymen) that were otherwise hard to come by: loans, immigration assistance, and more or less guaranteed jobs.

It took Gerardo over twenty years to seek medical help. This is in part due to his own uncertainties about the seriousness of his gradually developing illness. He explained to me that he felt his disease slowly worsening in his body for a long time, at least from age 28. It became especially worrisome to him six years after he quit working for Hidalgo. His delay was also due in part to the fact that the doctors he saw at the local non-profit clinics could not diagnose him properly: perhaps because they did not have time to amidst endless lines of low income patients that persist into the present day. At first, Gerardo drank alcohol to control his tremors and to numb his anxiety about his health and other difficulties. Eventually that stopped working. He sought treatment in Mexico for anxiety and depression, which were initially attributed to his physical symptoms. The folk regimens prescribed included herbal teas, deer blood capsules, and taking sweat baths. He felt better but only temporarily.

Gerardo continued to work in the strawberry fields until 2011 at the age of 63 when his tremors became too uncontrollable. That same year he qualified for Medicare. He could finally afford to see a neurologist who diagnosed him with Parkinson's and linked him to Stanford University Hospital. There, Gerardo joined a clinical trial. Inside of his chest, doctors installed a device that has electrodes running up to his brain: a procedure that required five surgeries over the course of a year. Luz did not realize the severity of his brother's health problems until 2012 when Gerardo first went in for surgery. Gerardo felt that this treatment drastically improved his quality of life. Most

notably, he took less medication and experienced fewer negative side effects as a result.

However, Luz observed that his brother's condition continues to deteriorate. I saw the worry lines crinkle around his eyes when talking about Gerardo. Claudia, too, was clearly distressed, but countered these feelings with stoicism. She became her husband's primary caretaker, driving him to doctor's visits at Stanford. Their granddaughter also contributed to Gerardo's care, getting up from her homework to answer the phone for her *abuelo* (grandpa) and reminding him to do his exercises.

Gerardo's migrant cohort and coworkers kept tabs on one another: through phone calls, random encounters in town, or through gossip and word of mouth. Because of these long-term relationships, Gerardo reported to me that four of his *compañeros*, including *el patrón* (the Hidalgo family patriarch) are either dead or dying from the same kind of pancreatic cancer. Sr. Hidalgo is buried at the public cemetery on Watsonville's outskirts. Gerardo happened to be the only one with Parkinson's that he knows of. A few *compañeros* moved back to Mexico after retiring from farm work. It is possible that they are sick, dying, or dead, too.

More than anything, Gerardo and his brother Luz wanted to know of any relationships between pesticide exposure, Parkinson's disease, and the cancer that has claimed the lives of their *paisanos*. How the exposure happened is especially tragic and indicative of the relationship between pesticide illnesses and farmworkers' many other vulnerabilities and the inability of laws and regulations to fully protect workers.

Back in the 1980s, Gerardo and ten other coworkers used to "pull hoses": industry speak for spraying pesticides on crops using a rubber hose attached to a large

holding tank pulled by a tractor. One worker would drive the tractor carrying the tank of pesticide, while the others would help heave and move the hose from row to row. This awkward and strenuous work required a lot of jumping over strawberry rows, which are sometimes eighteen inches tall. The men would sweat profusely.

Before Sr. Hidalgo had his crew do this work, Gerardo remembered that an inspector stopped by and had each worker sign a form stating that they understood that the law mandated that they could not work with this chemical for more than 30 hours a *year*. The brothers wanted to know if I could help them find out what Gerardo might have been exposed to. They asked me to use my research skills to excavate the paper trail (if it still exists or ever existed) and to share what I discovered about pesticides in the strawberry industry in the 1980s. The only clues I garnered from our discussion were the name of the farm (which is still in operation), Gerardo's memory of signing a form acknowledging the rules governing time use restrictions on some pesticides, and his recalling of applying chemicals to kill the Mediterranean fruit fly (or Medfly) which plagued California at that time. He also remembers getting gassed in the face when ripping up tarps following soil fumigations. His face contorted and his pitch rose as he reenacted the burning sensation in his nose and eyes.

Upon consulting with a modern-day agricultural extension agent, the only chemicals from that era that carried time use restrictions and which were applied with hoses were organophosphates: specifically, malathion, diazinon, and chlorpyrifos. Scientists have confirmed links between this class of chemicals and neurological degenerative disorders, including Parkinson's disease (Manthripragada et al. 2010; Owens et al. 2010; Brown et al. 2006). Organophosphate pesticides work by disrupting

the critical electronic messages between the brain and the body, which are carried by the nerves (aka. neurotransmission). Eventually, this can kill a living organism. While the target organism with pesticides is usually an insect, a weed, a fungus, or a microscopic bacteria or nematode, humans are also vulnerable to these chemicals. Other pesticides, namely herbicides and fungicides, which are also widely used in the conventional strawberry industry in California, may cause the pancreatic cancer that killed at least three of Gerardo's workmates and his boss (Ji et al. 2001; Moses 1999; Bassil et al. 2007). Several of the most common soil fumigants used in California – methyl bromide, chloropicrin, metam sodium, and Telone – are known carcinogens, neurotoxins, and hormone (endocrine) disruptors (PANNA 2012).

This evidence is compelling; however, one cannot know for certain what caused Gerardo's and his coworkers' illnesses. The power of not knowing *exactly* what happened to Gerardo and his workmates is compounded by the power of industry to perpetuate this doubt and uncertainty. It is possible that Gerardo would have developed Parkinson's with or without having been heavily exposed to organophosphate pesticides. His theories are further negated by laxly enforced regulations and chemical evaluation policies that use unrealistic models to determine a pesticide's properties and safety in isolation from other chemicals, environmental factors, and the individual biologies of farmworkers. Doubt is also fostered by farmworkers' own mixed responses with respect to the safety and economic necessity of pesticides.

Contestation and Negation On and Off the Farm

Pesticide injured workers are produced on a number of fronts. Pesticide related illnesses and injuries may result in part from employer's careless disregard for even the

most basic rules and regulations. Workers may not be provided or may chose not to use personal protective equipment. Most importantly, workers' have very little control to avoid pesticide exposure without risking their livelihoods. It is likely that throughout their adult lifetimes Gerardo and his workmates were exposed to an array of agrochemicals. It remains unclear how different factors, such as age at exposure, gender, genes and environmental and genetic interactions effect health outcomes for exposed individuals and communities.

The EPA- and CA DPR-mandated evaluations of agrochemicals do not require companies to investigate how different products interact synergistically in the environment and in the body. The agrochemical companies themselves fund most of the research, either privately or through university grants and foundations. This institutionalizes doubt. There is the doubt produced by those Oreskes and Conway (2010) call "The Merchants of Doubt": privately contracted "experts" who concoct evidence that supports their clients' rights to sell products and services that are possible health or environmental hazards. And then there is the culture of doubt that shapes everyday human interactions: from Gerardo's disagreements with his wife, to acceptance of God's will for the birth of developmentally disabled and disfigured or miscarried babies, to the unscientific use of one's own health sometimes put forward by growers or long-time pesticide applicators as indisputable evidence that proves the safety of agrochemicals.

The culture of doubt is embedded within the very culture of agriculture (Harrison 2011:72). As Harrison (ibid) explains:

Researchers who have studied farmers' perceptions of pesticide risks have found that farmers widely believe that pesticides are safe and controllable, spills during

mixing and application are the only significant sources of pesticide exposure on farms, and pesticide residues do not pose a health hazard. This widespread causal disregard for the dangers of pesticides justifies the high rates of pesticide use and risky application practices.

Gerardo's story and countless others stand in stark contrast to this letter to the editor submitted to *Neurology Now* magazine by Joe Wilson, then CEO of PermaTreat Pest Control Company (2009) in response to an article covering the newly discovered links between Parkinson's and pesticides:

Sitting in the waiting room of my neurologist, I had an opportunity to look over the Sept./Oct. 2008 issue of *Neurology Now*. Appropriately, I turned to the Waiting Room section and read the article entitled New Study Links Parkinson's and Pesticides. Having recently celebrated 42 years in the pest-control industry (half with a national pest control firm, and the other half as the owner/operator of a regional pest control company), I can say that I have had hundreds of people working under me who handled pesticides on a daily basis. I cannot recall one single instance where any of our technicians developed Parkinson's, or had any other type of neurological problem. With worker's compensation insurance readily available, I probably would have been the first to know of any incident. Your article specifically mentioned chlorpyrifos, diazinon, and malathion, all common pesticides used by the pest control industry. It seems to me that if Duke University Medical Center and the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine had wanted to do a more thorough study they would have included people who work with pesticides on a daily basis, rather than singling out people with Parkinson's and their relatives and asking about their pesticide exposure. Could there be a tie between Parkinson's and the laundry detergents used by the subjects? (Joe R. Wilson, CEO of PermaTreat Pest Control, Inc., Fredericksburg, VA)

What brought Mr. Wilson to the neurologist is uncertain; however, his waiting room experience was vastly different from Gerardo's. While Gerardo wondered for twenty years what happened to his body, Mr. Wilson would not even consider the possibilities. He assumed that the workers' compensation system and other regulations would keep him and his employees safe from harm.

Ironically, his snide reference to laundry detergents and neurological disorders unintentionally highlights yet another layer of chemical exposure in everyday life. The

CHAMACOS (CERCH 2012) study, a longitudinal research project exploring the role of an array of chemicals and their effects on the health of low-income groups in California, is one example of how both layers of chemicals and layers of social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities, ranging from housing, water quality, cheap furniture, plastics, and occupational exposures shape community health. The culture of agribusiness has a long historical legacy of negation regarding pesticide-related health and environmental hazards and suffering. Scientists too, including medical doctors and those employed by the state to evaluate pesticide safety and risks, also play a role in negating environmental health harms by defining their interventions, diagnoses, and policies around false certainties and uncertainties. Harrison explored this as it relates to pesticide risk analysts employed by the state of California (2011). Doubt and denial circulate not only in grower and agribusiness advocate and lobbyists circles, but, as Gerardo's wife Claudia demonstrates, are also adopted by some farmworkers.

The Political Ecology of Agriculture, Pesticides, and Reproductive Health

The suspicions and knowledge of farmworkers and rural residents with regards to pesticides' many harms are voiced quietly, during interviews or in small informal group discussions. Sometimes, they are expressed on the body through clothing.

While completing my pilot field work in Watsonville during the summer of 2009, I had an opportunity to spend time in a field where a farmer grew a combination of blackberries, red raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries. I asked the grower if I could observe the workers in action and reconfirmed with the foreman and *ponchadora* (quality inspector and box counter). They didn't seem to mind, so long as I stayed out of the way of the workers.

It was an unusually hot summer day: a heat exacerbated by the plastic tarp hoop houses used to keep the berries warm and dry so they grow extra plump. The ground had patches of mud from drip irrigation system leaks, but otherwise, the dust swirled in the air with the workers' brisk movements. Men and women worked together under the hoop houses moving and up and down each raspberry plant. They deftly sorted the berries on the spot, tossing those that felt too soft between the fingers or that showed signs of insect or worm damage to the ground. Plastic buckets are worn strapped to leather belts around the shoulders or the waist and are used to collect each worker's harvest. Farmworkers then walk to the end of the row. At individualized packing and sorting tables, they deftly and neatly arrange the berries into pre-labeled and branded plastic cartons (different sizes for different vendors). In this case, the boxes also had a "certified organic" seal. Workers are paid per box of a dozen plastic clamshell containers picked and packed into a cardboard flat. In the cane berries (raspberries, blackberries, blueberries), the pay in 2010 was around \$2 to \$2.75 a box, on top of an hourly wage of \$3.

I certainly was not exerting myself this day, as I simply stood aside with my notebook and camera and documented the work as the harvest unfolded. Nevertheless, I felt the heat getting to me. The inner brim of my hat became soaked with sweat and I quickly felt dehydrated. Eventually, the workers took their lunch break and I was offered a plastic lawn chair (another long-fought worker safety victory) and sat to chat with them for a bit. One woman looked visibly pale and sweaty and grasped her right side in discomfort. Her face winced a bit as she walked. When I asked what was wrong, the group exclaimed in unison, "Oh, she's pregnant." She sat down with the support of a

compañera and drank a little bit of water. I was offered a nectarine and an apple to eat, but I suggested that these be offered to their pregnant *compañera* instead. The response I got was that no one ate or drank very much at lunch or at work, as the heat and constant bending and unbending usually led to vomiting. An empty stomach helped stop this side effect of the work.

Despite the heat, workers wear many layers of clothing in the fields to protect themselves from a number of environmental assaults--ranging from sun and dust, to pesticides. The (un)official farmworker uniform, with its multiple self-made layers, is more or less the same for men and women. Hooded sweatshirts with long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes or boots, gloves (sometimes, depending on the crop), a wide brimmed hat or cap, and a bandana across the face and sometimes around the back of the neck and around the collar protect workers from sunburn, abrasions from the sometimes sharp-edged plants, and pesticide residues in the air, on the crops, and on people's skin.

One key difference between the use of clothing for protection amongst men and women deals specifically with worker sexuality. Castañeda and Zavella (2003:12) note that these layers of clothes serve to "mask" women from social dangers in the fields. By de-sexualizing and -feminizing themselves, covering their faces and their behinds liberally with layers of bandanas and clothing, farmworker women attempt to discourage unwanted sexual advances and harassment from male-coworkers (Waugh 2010:255). Waugh (2010) and Ontiveros (2002:158) describe the intersections of class, race, citizenship status, and gender discrimination commonly experienced by farmworker women. Using the metaphor of a traffic intersection, Waugh explains: "Marginalized

women located at these intersections because of their group memberships must manage the 'traffic' they confront to avoid harm” (ibid:238). 80 percent of Waugh's survey respondents, farmworker women from California's Central Valley, reported routine sexual harassment in the farm fields (ibid:256; SPLC 2010). The female farmworker uniform serves multiple roles and functions for a complex “political economy of risk” for life in and beyond the fields (Castañeda and Zavella 2003:17). Sexual and reproductive health is affronted from many different directions on and off the farm amidst environmental toxicities and social and economic vulnerabilities.

Gradually, special programs and pamphlets that address female reproductive health and pesticides have been produced by farmworker rights and empowerment groups like *Lideres Campesinas*. Many companies have instated sexual harassment trainings that are mandated for all workers and repeated throughout the year. At an agricultural safety conference I attended, there seemed to be a sincere concern amongst employers and supervisors for the women who experienced sexual harassment at work.⁶ Workshops helped audience members distinguish between what was and wasn't sexual harassment (legally speaking) and concluded with discussions of overt and more subtle and cloudy real-life examples. By participating in employer trainings and instating sexual harassment educational programming at worksites, some companies could get an insurance discount and mitigate their liability should they be taken to court.

6. Farmworker men may also experience sexual harassment at work from supervisors or peers via repercussions for supporting female coworkers, as witnesses of abuse, or on account of their LGBTQ identities (HRW 2012).

Still, some of the farmworker women I interviewed had experienced miscarriages, still births, or other complications. Rumors of the magnitude of this problem circulate amongst the nurses at the Watsonville Community Hospital. Their observations led one community leader and a group of reproductive health advocates and researchers to start investigating the problem so that it can be addressed more methodologically (Townsend and Lehrner 2012). Upon completion, this project will join a growing body of locally-produced scientific evidence (CERCH 2012). But at what point will these findings be taken seriously, especially in the wake of a hidden trail of bodies that go undocumented, uncounted, and unnoticed due to the perpetual manufacturing of doubt about the relationships between pesticides and health?

Graciela, the eldest daughter of six children and her mother, Victoria, crafted a collection box out of cardboard and construction paper. It featured a poor quality photograph, likely taken with a cell phone, of a dead baby. Victoria's sister, Fernanda, had been pregnant with her first child while working in the strawberry fields along with other family members. Her baby, a boy, was stillborn. Graciela passed this box around a classroom of aspiring organic farmers to collect funds that would be used to send the baby's body back to their hometown in Michoacán. There, he would be buried with other deceased kin. Such collections for binational burials were not uncommon during my field work, but usually these informal fundraisers would help send the bodies of deceased elders home to Mexico. During our interview, Victoria and her husband Martino would not accept my usual cash reciprocity offering (\$25); however, they did allow me to place it in the collection box. Other women I interviewed frequently referred to miscarried or stillborn children as their sons and daughters. Bell et al. (2001) found a

compelling epidemiological correlation between maternal residential pesticide exposure and fetal deaths in California's Central Valley and other studies have had similar results (Pastore et al. 1997; Bretveld et al. 2006; Schettler et al. 2000:107-125); however, it is difficult to determine which pesticides or combinations of pesticides and other factors induce miscarriages.

Victoria's entire extended family worked in the strawberry fields and most worked through their second trimesters, including then pregnant Victoria and Fernanda. It is becoming a more common practice for some of the larger employers to allow pregnant farmworker women to take "disability leave" during their second or third trimesters. These company-specific policies grant pregnant women permission to take leave and receive half pay. As Victoria described it, all she had to do was stop by the human resources department at work and fill out some paperwork. The following season or after the baby is born, women can return to their old jobs without penalty. Women employed by certain companies who offer this kind of maternity leave can access the benefit regardless of their documentation status. Other farmworkers referred to informal systems of cooperation amongst themselves meant to help ease some of the burdens of farm work for their pregnant *compañeras*: namely, delegating the heavy lifting requirements to male coworkers or helping a sick, pregnant or elderly workers finish their row or quota.

However, in the fields, there really isn't much one can do to insulate oneself from pesticide exposure, especially from the persistent low-dose levels that are ubiquitous in the air in the Central Coast region, especially during the six month growing season. Veronica's husband Martino pulled extra weight during his wife's four month absence

from work. Both expressed their concerns about pesticides. Their faces cringed when describing the sensation of known exposure: intense burning in the nose and eyes. Since they were taking courses to become organic farmers, their formal knowledge about the ecological and health impacts of pesticides had grown. They also knew plenty from their experiences working in the berries in their 20s and 30s and helping their families to maintain traditional pesticide-free corn fields in Mexico amidst mounting pressures to switch to chemically intensive hybrid and GMO-seed agriculture. The safety of their sixth child was worth the loss of income. I could see how visibly tired Martino was that day when he came home from work. Nevertheless, he carried on into the evening hours sorting a large box of freshly picked beans that someone had gifted to him. He would share these with his extended family and neighbors to help make ends meet.

Not all farmworker women are offered “disability” leaves for pregnancies, and some chose to keep working. Some did not feel that they had a choice. My *compañera* Yolanda, 26 years old, crossed the U.S.-Mexico border two months into her pregnancy, the result of being raped by an acquaintance in their home pueblo in Oaxaca. She worked in the raspberry fields through the birth of her son, Rolando, in late October, just as the harvesting season came to a close. As a soon-to-be single mother, then living in what amounted to a closet in a home with five or six other families, her social workers told her that if she wanted to keep her baby, she would have to prove that she could provide a safe home for him. Her co-worker and *copadre* (godfather to her son) commented to me that he never saw anyone work so hard and fast as Yolanda, even while pregnant. Her sister Yesenia, 16 years old upon her first migration to the U.S.,

helped Yolanda out immensely by working just as hard in the raspberries and helping take care of Rolando. In our conversations, which usually took place during car rides to church events and to various appointments, Yolanda recounted that she came to the U.S. to be able to provide for her son, to make a better life for him, and to help out her recently widowed mother and now fatherless younger siblings. Their dad died of complications from diabetes in his 50s. But Yolanda's circumstances as a single mom did not allow her to take any leaves of absence from work.

Let's Talk About Pesticides: Teens and their Parents

Rolando grew to be a highly intelligent, playful, and energetic toddler. He received rave reviews from his teachers at the Head Start program that he attended during the berry season while Yolanda and her siblings worked. But teachers in the Pájaro Valley schools noted to me that some problems don't become evident until children are older. Many teachers are starting to wonder if their students' and parents' persistent exposure to pesticides is causing the high levels of learning and developmental disabilities they observed in their classrooms. This was especially of concern amongst teachers who worked in the schools surrounded by agricultural fields.

More and more evidence has come out supporting these teachers' theories regarding the relationship between chemical exposure, either in utero or in the first five years of life, and learning and developmental disabilities that may affect children (and their parents) for the rest of their lives (Heindel 2000; Schettler 2001). Anthropologist Elizabeth Guillelte and colleagues (1998) compared and contrasted the neurobehavioral development of Yaqui children living in two different regions of Sonora: one with heavy pesticide use in the agricultural valley and one in the mountains where traditional

pesticide-free agriculture was practiced. The results indicated significant developmental delays in the valley children, especially with respect to hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and short term memory (ibid). Children's health played a key role in motivating the regional struggles against the continued use of the particularly toxic class of pesticides known as soil fumigants in the 1990s, and the potential use of the soil fumigant methyl iodide during my fieldwork in 2010-2012. In fact, some of the high school students – many, the children of farmworkers – who participated in the movement struggled with learning disabilities among many other vulnerabilities.

Gloria, a 17 year old high school student, the eldest daughter of migrant strawberry pickers, expressed her concern for her family's health by applying her community service hours, required to graduate, to the movement against methyl iodide. Several of her friends, including 16 year old Ofelia, 6 months pregnant at the time, joined in. Gloria's father, Uriel, worked in the fields behind their home on the outskirts of Watsonville, while her mother, Rufina, worked for another company on the Monterey County side of the Pájaro Valley. Both parents felt proud of their daughter for taking the time to learn and do something about an issue that hit them all so close to home. Rufina in particular mentioned her concern for pregnant farmworker mothers. At the clinic where she went for her annual exam and ob check-ups during her most recent pregnancy with her youngest daughter, Maria (6 years old), she learned that exposure to pesticides can cause harm to unborn babies (*las crias*): miscarriages, stillbirths, birth defects and developmental disabilities.⁷

7. Not all doctors' offices provide such comprehensive health care with respect to patient education on pesticide exposure risks. Planned Parenthood, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and unionized nurses, were among the few health-based organizations and health care providers to join the students and others in the struggle against methyl iodide. Local non-profit clinics and some

Uriel, on the other hand, had worked on commercial organic farms and felt that he made less money there due to the lower yields that organic crops delivered.⁸ While he expressed concern about the health effects his daughter had discovered during her research and community service work, he also worried that without soil fumigants to rid the soil of the pests that plagued the berries, he would make significantly less money as there wouldn't be enough berries to pick. Worse still, banning or restricting soil fumigants could put him out of a job.

With a family of four kids to support, this thought in particular scared Uriel, and made him defensive of and loyal towards his current employers and their production practices. Still, they lived in the middle of a strawberry field in one of those old houses once occupied by individual farm families. The rent was much cheaper outside of Watsonville City limits and this was the only home they could afford to live in as a single family. A few years ago, they shared an apartment with another family. It was a great relief to finally have their own space. When the growers posted a notice on their front door each year indicating the time frame when fumigation would take place, the family didn't have anywhere else to go. Rufina said they just kept the windows closed and waited to do laundry, which hung on a line outside to dry, until the week-long reentry period had passed. She depended on Gloria to translate the notice, which arrived reliably every year in August or September.

private practices specializing in occupational medicine, often financed by grants and donations from or patronized by agribusinesses, remained silent on the issue.

8. Yield differences between organic and conventional production in strawberries and other crops is debated and conflicted in the literature and varies by region, growing conditions, and farming techniques (Seufert et al. 2012).

Concerns about decreased yields and income are repeated vehemently by growers, and passed on to workers through interactions with foremen and supervisors. This class of farm workers is only paid a few more dollars per hour than harvesters and they are often promoted from within the ranks of the crews. They have more direct communication with the growers and receive more information about all aspects of farm production: from pesticide applications to market fluctuations. They too often adopt their employers' points of view even though they are in many ways just as vulnerable to pesticide exposure in the fields.

Gloria and her classmates very cleverly thought to post information about methyl iodide as well as petitions against it on the *loncheras* (food trucks) where their family members bought lunch every day. They were able to use their status as students, who are very highly esteemed in many first generation migrant families, to enable the distribution of the information about soil fumigants without any trouble for farm management. The students, with the help of a few teachers and me, carefully researched and crafted their findings into flyers using very simple and accessible language for those campesinos who had low literacy levels.

After a while, however, Gloria and her classmates lost a lot of enthusiasm for this work. They felt that too many of their family members and campesino acquaintances were apathetic or indifferent about pesticides. What difference could they possibly make in this struggle without the enthusiastic support, participation, and interest of their community? In late November of 2010, after making a presentation to the Watsonville City Council – which voted unanimously to support the students' urging for more caution before shifting to methyl iodide – governor Schwarzenegger approved the CA DPR's

recommendation to register the carcinogenic soil fumigant against the advice of the official Scientific Review Committee. The students' spirits had been effectively dampened, and their enthusiasm diminished rapidly. Also present at the City Council meeting on November 30th was a public relations professional hired to represent Arysta LifeScience in the defense of their product, methyl iodide.

Growers, Lobbyists, and Agribusiness

I heard refrains about the critical economic importance of soil fumigants repeated not only by growers and their lobbyists (detailed below) but also by farmworkers, like Uriel. I also heard expressions of doubt or indifference about pesticide risks echoed by both growers and farmworkers, like Claudia and her former employers the Hidalgos. I wondered if such seeming indifference towards the risks of pesticides had more to do with the many layered vulnerabilities of farmworkers who occupy the bottom of the labor hierarchy than with a sincere lack of concern. Given that there are so few job opportunities for people in the farm working class, either in Mexico or the U.S., there is a strong dependence on agribusiness for employment and base-level survival. This alliance between some farmworkers and growers on the pesticide issue may also stem from a legacy of anti-union organizing by growers in an effort to placate farmworker employees so as to avoid massive workforce unionization. This entailed outbidding union contracts by offering benefits and pay raises independently of collective bargaining efforts (and without the paycheck deduction), and paying farmworkers to participate in pro-grower demonstrations. However, it is also true that farmworker satisfaction with the UFW has diminished immensely as the dues rates have gone up

and the quality of service from union organizers has faltered as leaders in the organization assume more concentrated power and higher salaries (Grimes 2013).

Practices of corporate paternalism, and the cultivation of a sense of caring for employees by rewarding them with food or company-logo hats and jackets for meeting or exceeding quotas, keeping injuries and accidents down, or to celebrate the end of the season, helped ensure employee loyalty and helped mitigate resistance to abuses or injustices. So long as the working conditions remained tolerable and the pay checks continued to be written on a regular basis, many of the farmworkers I met stated that they would continue to return to the same company year after year. If something bad happened, an injury, a pesticide exposure, a disagreement with a supervisor, it proved much easier to quit than to follow any number of paths to resist the injustices. Often, the only recourse available came through human resources departments, which routinely disregarded or minimized workers' complaints and concerns.

During my fieldwork, the UFW seemed preoccupied with making an occasional scene – sometimes helpfully, sometimes in celebration or protest, and sometimes for their own organizational political gain – focusing on policy lobbying, or working to negotiate contracts with minimal worker input and unfair treatment of paid organizers (Grimes 2013). Not all lawyers could be trusted. Many with and without JDs extorted and defrauded their low-income and desperate farmworker clients out of thousands of dollars. Farmworkers knew all too well that despite their on-the-books labor rights, their documentation status could and would be used against them in workplace conflicts. It is estimated that between 60 and 90 percent of farmworkers in the U.S. are undocumented (Minkoff-Zern and Getz 2011:18). Some companies were a lot more

comfortable to work for than others, and it took some years for newly arrived farmworkers to find a good-enough fit.

Growers, too, are vulnerable to the politics of pesticides and the unpredictable shifts of the agricultural economy. For decades, following the shift to monocultural commercial production, growers have been dependent upon non-farm technical experts to address pest, and now labor and harvest management issues. The Green Revolution, a social and scientific movement to improve agriculture using technical strategies, synthetic chemical amendments, and genetic alterations in the name of global food security and improved yields is often promoted as justification for the continued use of pesticides. In other instances, growers and lobbyists pressured policy makers and farmworkers by emphasizing their part in job creation for the region, and in relation, the role of pesticides in ensuring agricultural productivity.

However, this perpetual dependence on synthetic chemical pest controls threatens the political economy and ecology of the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys in the short and long term, and therefore, the future of Central Coast agriculture. The beginnings of this demise can be seen in Central Valley California agricultural towns where the water is not only scarce, but also too poison to drink or bathe in. Some towns along the Central Coast are already suffering the consequences of agricultural water contamination, namely the farmworker housing cooperative of San Jerardo outside of Salinas (Holbrook 2012) and the unincorporated communities of San Lucas in South Monterey County and of Springfield Springfield Terrace ten miles outside of Watsonville in North Monterey County (Rubin 2013). Residents in these areas have experienced severe rashes, hair loss, cancer deaths as well as the nearly instantaneous deaths of

pets who drank the contaminated tap water. These clusters of water contamination are not as numerous as they are in the Central Valley but perhaps are an indication of damage to come (Anderson et al. 2010; Taylor 2013; Holbrook 2012; Rubin 2013). All of these elements are tightly bound to the social, health, and welfare outcomes of farmworkers and other rural residents. The rapid depletion of water in the Central Coast region, via salt water intrusion that results from over pumping for irrigation is also of grave concern (Barlow and Reichard 2009).

Students, parents, and teachers have been at the forefront of anti-pesticide activism in the Pájaro Valley for decades. Following the approval of methyl iodide for agricultural use at the tail end of the Schwarzenegger Administration, the area teachers' union mobilized around the discovery that California educators' pensions were tied to Arysta LifeScience via Permira: the private equity fund that had invested in Arysta's purchase by a Japanese firm in 2008 (Duan 2010).

Shortly after the unanimous passage of the Permira divestment resolution by members of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) at their annual convention in 2011, the CFT president received a call from prominent Sacramento-based agricultural lobbyist, George Soares. He wanted to schedule a meeting with the CFT leadership and the Pájaro Valley teachers and students who had instigated the campaign. I had been working closely with Rene, a teacher, and her students on the grassroots campaign against methyl iodide. She invited me and her former student Pepe to come along.

Rising up several stories in a building in the heart of Sacramento, only blocks away from the state capitol building, Rene, Pepe, and I were accompanied by the CFT president and his lobbying assistant: both former teachers. The three of us served as

ambassadors for Pájaro Valley teachers and students. When we reached the 8th floor, the CFT president guided us to Mr. Soares' office, and from there, into a glass fishbowl meeting room with a large rectangular table, high backed rolling leather chairs, and a buffet table lined with cookies and soft drinks. Mr. Soares urged us to help ourselves, but we all felt too anxious to eat.

It wasn't entirely clear what the purpose of this meeting was until each of the six men sitting around the table introduced themselves. In addition to Mr. Soares, three California growers (two strawberry growers, and one grower of mixed vegetable and specialty crops) and three representatives from three different agribusiness and trade group organizations presented their personal stories, perspectives, and experiences about methyl iodide and other soil fumigants. All three of the growers, Mr. Martin (white), Mr. Gomez (Mexican American), and Mr. Yang (Hmong), had used methyl iodide on their farms: the former two had participated in methyl iodide research trials while the latter had been among the first of only six farmers in California to apply methyl iodide to a commercial plot, using a free sample from Arysta.

Part of the initially unstated objective of the meeting was to humanize the growers so that we as activists would have a better idea of where they were coming from, why they needed methyl iodide, and thus, why we needed to stop organizing against their last resort crop protection tool. It also served as an opportunity for the growers to demonstrate their responsibility as professionals but also as human beings with sincere concerns for the health of workers, neighbors, consumers, and the environment. The pesticide reform and anti-pesticide lobby were not invited to attend.

It was difficult to ignore some of the shared vulnerabilities, and sometimes, strikingly similar histories, between these growers and their farmworker employees. For instance, Mr. Yang immigrated to this country as a refugee during the genocidal conflicts in Southeast Asia that continued after the Vietnam War. He recounted to us how his family used to farm using swidden or slash and burn agriculture: techniques that were then ostracized as primitive and environmentally destructive by colonial administrators and later, social scientists, aid workers, and conservationists charged with modernizing the agricultural practices of third world countries.

These racist legacies made their mark on Mr. Yang, who looked at me as he emphasized the importance of modernization in agriculture. In order to survive as a farmer in the hyper competitive global market for specialty vegetables, he emphasized that he must use all of the latest technology and tools that are available to him. These included methyl iodide, but also till free soil erosion prevention strategies which best suit the environmental conditions on his farm. Without pesticides, he would not have a successful family business to pass on to his children, and he would not be able to provide familiar healthy foods for his Asian-origin neighbors in the Central Valley and beyond. His personal history reminded me of the struggles faced by Mexican corn farmers, who must decide whether or not to farm with synthetic chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and GMO seeds, as the state and technical experts urge them to do, or to maintain their traditional productive agricultural practices that originally developed in North America thousands of years ago.

For Mr. Gomez, soil fumigants like methyl iodide allowed him to maintain a level of production in his strawberry fields that provides jobs for 60 loyal farmworkers, 90

percent of whom return each year to continue working for him. “I spend \$1 million each year just on labor expenses; I’d have to pay a lot more if I didn’t have crop protection tools, and I can’t afford that.” Quickly, I calculated what that \$1 million would amount to for each worker. The *average* pay for each Mr. Gomez’ workers at the time was \$16,600. Since this is a mean sum, many of his employees probably earned salaries well below the poverty level. All of the farmworkers I met made significantly less than \$16,000 a year, while foremen, supervisors, pesticide applicators, and other employees made a little bit more than harvesters (\$10-15 per hour).

In terms of his experiences with methyl iodide specifically, Mr. Gomez and the lobbyists spent a significant amount of time arguing with Rene, Pepe and me about one of the stated “realities” in the CFT Premira divestment resolution text. During the resolution drafting process, teachers and students both reflected on the fact that cuts in public and school bus transportation statewide meant that many more students walk to and from school each day, often past or through fumigated fields. Mr. Gomez contested this, claiming that in his 30 years of farming he had never seen students walking in or near his fields.

I often observed students, farmworkers, and increasingly homeless folks, walking or biking near fields. Joggers and families out for a walk on the outskirts of town often use the muddy tractor trails that border fields for recreation, as there are no sidewalks and few bike lanes beyond the city limits. Cycling teams, too, often used rural roads that cut through fumigated fields for their training exercises. Several households are located adjacent to fields as the population of the Central Coast has become more and more dense. This fact in and of itself proved to be a point of contention between agribusiness

and the concerned public. With great frustration, growers insisted that people either needed to get used to living near productive agriculture or move away. This sentiment mimics their response to workers who occasionally express their concerns about pesticides: *If you don't like it, go away.*

Mr. Gomez insisted that he had never experienced any of the claimed health effects of soil fumigants, nor had any of his workers. This of course assumed that his employees would report their symptoms (if they experienced any) freely to their employers, and that farmworkers would always be aware that they were being exposed to chemicals (since so many are colorless and odorless and don't provoke symptoms uniformly in all people). However, studies indicate and pesticide poisoning data demonstrate that farmworkers are often reluctant to report injuries and illnesses sustained at work (Quandt et al. 2000; Oliphant 2008).

According to Gomez, university-based field research trials with methyl iodide on his land presented no problems, only good results in the field in the form of healthy and productive strawberry plants. Because the application period is only for a short time, he feels that there is minimal exposure risk to the public, that his farm is too far from the city center to present any significant risk, and that pedestrians or passersby don't linger long enough for there to be any possibility of harm. Whenever he applied fumigants, he claimed that he always did so when school was out of session. He always wore the same protective gear as his highly trained applicator assistants. And, he followed the daily application allowances designated by the CA DPR. Application allowances are chemical-specific limits that require growers to treat their soil gradually rather than all at once in order to keep ambient air levels of soil fumigants below the DPR designated

human health hazard threshold (measured in parts per milion). For methyl iodide, Gomez explained, the daily allowances are so small that it would take him a few days to finish the job on his 40 acres.

The Right Way to Care About Farmworkers

My visit with this group of lobbyists, trade group representatives, and growers was certainly one of a kind as far as ethnographic encounters are concerned. As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, my access to agricultural fields was limited, but so too was my access to growers. More often than not, trade groups, lobbyists, lawyers, and public relations professionals represented growers and agribusinesses in the public sphere. During my fieldwork, growers did attend a few public forums on methyl iodide; their company-logo fleece-lined wind-breakers and mud-crusted work boots set them apart from other audience members. They were often accompanied by finely dressed lawyers and PR staff, who took notes on yellow legal pads or tablet computers. This latter group did most of the talking: carefully crafting unified, industry-wide messaging and policy pleas (demands) for the public sphere. This was especially evident at City Council and County Board of Supervisor meetings.

February 14th, 2012 proved to be an important victory for the anti-pesticide movement on the Central Coast and the struggle against methyl iodide and soil fumigants more broadly. Hundreds of farmworkers, activists, health care workers, teachers, students, and others rallied outside of and gradually filed into the Monterey County Court House in Salinas, where the County Board of Supervisors met bi-monthly to govern the region. The otherwise unremarkable government building neighbored a number of other landmarks. These included a now defunct jail house where spent a few

months in the 1960s. Across the street were the law offices of Lombardo and Gilles: a high-powered firm that defended Arysta LifeScience and methyl iodide and that had represented the interests of agribusinesses for decades. Their namesake lawyers came from prominent Monterey County grower-shipper families.

Significantly fewer representatives from agribusiness showed up at the court house that day. Instead, the industry dedicated resources to pay professionals to represent their interests. Months prior to the landmark meeting, the supervisors listened to arguments from both pro- and anti-methyl iodide camps, and required both groups to attempt to reach a compromise before asking their county representatives to act. The two groups, composed of pre-selected individuals from both sides, did meet and had an opportunity to listen to one another. In the end, while all gained more compassion for the work each side engaged in, they did not reach a meaningful compromise. On February 14th, each group argued their cases for and against the involvement of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors with regards to the continued registration of methyl iodide in the state of California.

The pro-methyl iodide contingency urged the board to not get involved with the issue. First of all, they had no legal authority to do so since pesticide regulations are decided at the state level. Second of all, doing anything to limit the productivity and profitability of agribusinesses in the area by questioning the registration of a crop protection tool would cause grave economic harm to an already struggling region. Conventional California growers and their lobbyists and advocates emphasized the urgency of insuring that the soil is *clean* – meaning sterilized of crop damaging pests –

so as to improve the likelihood of achieving high yields and marketable products.

Lawyer Jeff Gilles urged:

I'm passionate about protecting every part of agriculture, from the workforce to its land base Clean soil, which is, soil free of soil borne diseases is the key to high yields. Agriculture in the Salinas Valley has been fighting soil borne diseases since it became a leader in row crop production. And methyl bromide which is being completely phased out, was the only and has been the only effective eradicator of soil borne diseases until the registration of methyl iodide by the US EPA and the California Department of Regulation, uh excuse me, of California Department of Pesticide Regulation. That process took over ten years. Without an effective--alternative to methyl bromide, unfortunately the sky will fall on agriculture. The strawberry and lettuce industry which is dependent upon *high yields* to compete, will shrink. *Capital* will go and *is* going elsewhere. Jobs will be lost. [Corporate agribusiness] headquarters will not be *built*.

The unconscionable loss of jobs and business to the area became a common reprieve for proponents of methyl iodide, especially those with vested interests in the industry.

Mark Morai, the president of the California Strawberry Commission, a very powerful commodity trade group, also mobilized the clean soil narrative, but to demonstrate compassion with farmworkers who desperately needed these agricultural jobs.

The *strawberry in...* [starts to say industry but changes language] *the strawberry community* generates over 70,000 *direct*, um, on-farm jobs in California. In Monterey County, the strawberry farmers bring *nearly 1 billion dollars* to the local economy. Unfortunately strawberry farmers are faced with a dilemma. We have to have *clean plants, healthy plants* to grow strawberries *There's no choice*. A farm worker employee [must] optimize every day in the calendar *to make money, to bring home money* so we can pay our rent, our bills. Every day is crucial during the season. And when you have a field that is infected with some soil disease, the plants are wilting, very limited amount of strawberries are on the plant, *it's an obvious choice*. [Chuckling] Many of the workers will just come to me and say, '*Marcos, we can't make it here.*' And if they're in one crew that has more of that percentage of infected field they're saying '*this isn't fair! we need fields that are producing, to make money.*' And so we have to make arrangements, and we have to split the fields so that they're more evenly distributed *because we don't know where disease is going to pop up each year*. So *clean soil* is integral to *the farmer of course*. But the workers are being forgotten here, they have to make a living. And each year there are a certain amount of days they can do that in. They *optimize* the days.

Murai also uses his time at the podium to emphasize how “disconnected” the labor unions are from the realities of farmworkers in the fields. As I watched the audience react to this statement, many, including hundreds of farmworkers, shook their heads in disagreement and dismay. While many farmworkers who are paid by the piece rate are negatively affected by fruit shortages, this is but one of many layers of vulnerability they face. The unions, health care workers, community activists, and scientists understood the issue in a more multi-faceted way. Growers and their representatives also took time during their statements to scold the anti-methyl iodide contingent for being divisive and causing more harm than good to the community.

The outcome of this board of supervisors meeting, turned theater of debate, alarmed both sides equally. Monterey County leaders have historically sided with agribusinesses when it comes to issues of local governance. As the agribusiness representatives present at the February 14th meeting not so subtly noted, they are the ones who contribute the most economically to the region in terms of job creation and revenue production. Surprisingly, four of the five supervisors voted to send a community-crafted resolution to the CA DPR and Governor Brown expressing their constituents’ concerns regarding the registration of methyl iodide for agricultural use.

Not even 24 hours later, area agribusinesses, led by the California Strawberry Commission, were spinning the concept of *clean soil* in an entirely different way. A well-crafted press release, made for TV, internet, and the front page of local newspapers, highlighted the Commission’s work in the development of non-toxic alternatives to soil fumigants. These agro-ecological techniques ranged from coconut coir fiber (the hairy part of the coconut shell) and peat moss to supplement the soil and make it less

hospitable to pest organisms, to bio-fumigation strategies involving soil solarization and crop rotation that would kill pests without reliance on synthetic chemicals. To the organization's credit, the Commission had been investing resources towards the development of non-fumigant pest control alternatives since the early 2000s. However, their funding proposals to the USDA that would have allowed them to scale-up their research efforts almost always received rejection letters. The CA DPR, under the new leadership of a former organic farmer, Brian Leahy, has allotted a \$500,000 grant to be used to continue this research.

Slowly, alternative pest control strategies are being taken more seriously now that methyl iodide's manufacturer, Arysta LifeScience, voluntarily pulled their highly touted product from the U.S. market due to poor sales (Arysta 2012). Unceremoniously, they retracted the heavily funded U.S. EPA registration of methyl iodide in October of 2012. Scientific and public skepticism of methyl iodide, once touted as the ozone-friendly drop-in replacement for ozone-depleting methyl bromide, played a significant role in the market failure of the product. Arysta, however, will now focus their energies on selling methyl iodide abroad, in countries like Mexico, Guatemala, and Morocco, all key berry growing regions for U.S. based grower-shipper companies. Key community activists in the Pájaro Valley are also preparing themselves for the return of Arysta and methyl iodide, perhaps disguised by a new brand name.

Changing the Culture of Agriculture, Not Just the Business of Agribusiness

In *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens After Chernobyl*, anthropologist Adrianna Petryna (2002) explored the lives of irradiated victims following the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in Ukraine. Pesticide accidents are the most often cited and reported on, for

their dramatic effects; however, like the persistent dosing that residents in Eastern Europe get from Chernobyl's fall out, the routine of low-dose pesticide exposure is often written off by both agribusiness companies, the state, and even victims themselves. As Petryna notes:

In a situation where economic forces drive people to become preoccupied with physical survival, the effects of leaving the value of a person undefined are far-reaching. In such a world, physical risks, abuses, and uncertainties escalate. The labor of the [at risk] worker appears even more acceptable, desirable, and even normal (2002:3)

These negations are oftentimes juxtaposed with justifications for risks, as well as arguments in favor of agribusinesses on account of their contributions to the economy as legitimate businesses and job creators. Rajak theorizes these relationships along the lines of Mauss' "gift" in her study of corporate social responsibility in a South African mining community: "...The gift, as Eyben and León (2003) note, has both a bright and a shady side: on the one hand, personal commitment, passion and warmth, and on the other, paternalism, patronage and control" (2009:227). It is taboo to challenge agribusinesses or chemical companies about anything, as the moralizing hyperbole expressed by agribusiness representatives at the Monterey County Board of Supervisors Meeting on February 14th, 2012 demonstrated. They morally frame themselves as benevolent – job creators, feeders of the world, stewards of the land – and they need pesticides in order to accomplish these greater goods. When someone gets sick or hurt in the process, the blame is usually placed squarely on said individuals' own negligence, ignorance, or behavior.

Sociologist Jill Harrison, in her work with pesticide drift activists in California's Central Valley, notes how overt and multi-layered power imbalances inevitably "...shift the burden of pesticide pollution to the bodies of California's most marginalized and

vulnerable residents" (2011:1). While pesticides are applied on the farm, within a stone's throw of the schools attended by local children, and bordering rural residences, the decisions about whether or not a certain substance is safe for agricultural use, whether or not a substance constitutes an acceptable level of risk in our lives, are made off the farm in contexts far removed from the realities of everyday farmworker and rural existence.

Despite industry and individual denials, there is something disturbing taking place on the Central Coast with regards to farmworker health. In the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys – often praised as ‘paradise on earth’ for their one-of-a-kind Central Coast beauty and prosperous agricultural productivity – there are a number of hidden worlds. These include cancer support groups; cardiac and respiratory clinics; physical therapy for folks suffering from neurological deterioration; men and women in their 50s and 60s (or sometimes significantly younger) hobbling down the sidewalk with walkers and canes and tremors; sick kids and slow and hyperactive learners in the public school classrooms; neonatal ward nurses whispering about the unusually high number of birth defects (Townsend and Lehrner 2012:6); the long rides in the Care-A-Van shuttle to Stanford University's oncology and other specialist departments; and early deaths.

These programs and supports, while important and helpful, barely assuage the problems they seek to address. Again, as Petryna notes in the context of Chernobyl:

Rational-technical responses have exacerbated the biological and social problems they tried to resolve, even generated new ones. This process, in turn, contributes to further uncertainty concerning a resolution to the crisis, an increase in illness claims [both silent and voiced], and social suffering among affected individuals and groups (2002:3)

It is estimated that the life expectancy for strawberry farmworkers living and working in the U.S. is a mere 49 years (Castañeda and Zavella 2003; López 2008). Still,

the role of pesticides in exacerbating the many vulnerabilities that shorten farmworker life spans is not well understood and certainly not taken seriously enough. There is a perpetual call for more research before drawing conclusions about pesticides and health, as was the result of the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment civil rights suit filed on behalf of parents, teachers, and students in the Pájaro Valley School District. The Environmental Protection Agency, for the first time in its history of incorporating principles of environmental justice into its mission, did rule in favor of the plaintiffs in this civil suit, acknowledging that the civil rights of brown skinned children had been violated by their disproportionate exposure to toxic soil fumigants like methyl bromide and chloropicrin (Ewall 2012). However, no plaintiff received awards of restitution or guarantees of medical treatment chronic diseases that developed from low dose routine exposure. Instead, the EPA required the DPR to install testing equipment on the grounds of Ohlone Elementary and other schools in the Central Valley and southern Central Coast to continue measuring pesticide levels around schools. Strong research is important, but it is frustrating to watch the body and illness count rise in farmworker communities while meaningful interventions are negated or delayed due to claims of insufficient evidence of the actual lived risks and dangers.

CHAPTER 3

WORKERS' DECOMPENSATION

Once again, as I drove down the highway on a simmering hot fall day, a crew of women stood under a long line of colorful beach umbrellas, bunching and boxing green onions at a furious pace. A mix of men and women harvested the crop without the constant comfort of shade. Male farmworkers followed behind diesel-powered harvesting tractors, passing prime-grade broccoli, cauliflower, or lettuce pickings up to female crews, that sorted, washed and packaged the fresh product in branded plastic bags or cartons. As I continued towards the off ramp into Greenfield, a town in the southern Salinas Valley, I noticed a group of women delicately anchoring broccoli transplants into the soil.

Local landscape artists have found inspiration in scenes of farmworkers at work and at rest for color studies and large portraits. This art sold for hundreds, even thousands of dollars in upscale Monterey County galleries where collectors could appreciate the work of the harvest from an even greater distance. Some of them ended up hanging in the corporate headquarters of the major grower-shipper-packer firms. More ironically, a set of finely detailed oil and acrylic pieces are in display in the U.S. District Courthouse in Salinas. There, a number of undocumented and farmworkers without drivers' licenses contested or attempted to reduce the fines they accrued simply trying to get to work. The highway patrols in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties actively profiled vehicles that appeared to be informally transporting farmworkers driven by people without proper ID. One of the stranger subjects of these paintings featured a pesticide application helicopter diving towards a field of lettuce: no workers in sight. As much as the portraits attempted to appreciate agricultural labor, they also romanticized

it; they told the farmworkers' stories the way the Central Coast agricultural industry would have it: through beautiful, clean, safe, and green landscapes, labored by uncontentious working bodies taking satisfaction in their work.

The Salinas and Pájaro Valleys are home to several agribusinesses that produce a large percentage of the fresh fruits and vegetables that are harvested, processed, and distributed to “feed the world” as area billboards, advertisements, and angry letters-to-the-editor proclaim. These agribusinesses also create jobs, and profess themselves as stewards of the land. Their pro-industry treatises speak of hardships and challenges: labor shortages, water shortages, market instability, foreign competition, draconian pesticide and soil conservation laws, the costs of labor, and the nuisance of labor, health, and environmental enforcements. Indeed, these challenges faced by the growers of the world’s food should not be underestimated or undervalued. Yet, there are complex, and unequal relationships tangled up in these moral and economic claims of entitlement and frustration posed by members of the Central Coast agricultural industry. This framing is often pitted against the claims of farmworkers and their advocates, who acknowledge the inequalities produced by California agriculture (and, thus, the global agricultural economy) and how these disparities structure life and work on the farm.

Another one of those fancy oil paintings featured a group of farmworkers walking off into the sunset, carrying their lunch coolers, water bottles, and work boots over their shoulders as they headed home after a hard day’s work. My research demonstrates that the power relations produced by the agricultural economy in California follow farmworkers on their way home, producing structures of vulnerability both on and off the farm. In the case of workplace accidents, injuries, pain, and death, farmworkers carry

the health consequences of years of farm work – physical, emotional, financial, and social – for the rest of their lives, long after repatriating to Mexico or retiring from the fields.

For (im)migrant farmworkers, the standard forms of redress for such injuries, namely, accessing workers' compensation coverage, and more rarely, tort suits, are legally guaranteed in the state of California. All employers hiring over 5 employees must purchase workers' compensation insurance plans, and farmworkers, regardless of their documentation status, are eligible. Workers can sue a liable party if it is found that employer negligence is to blame for an occupational injury, illness or death. However, not all farmworkers follow through on the legally prescribed paths to justice for a number of reasons that are highlighted in the stories of Amanda, Lilia and her husband David, Juan and Aniceta: four farmworkers employed by different companies with four different work-related injuries.

Nader (2002:77), in her writings on contemporary legal anthropology, places a lot of stock in the power of the law to achieve social justice; however, strong policies require enforcement and systems of accountability as well as broad inclusion of different workers and workplaces. Farmworkers and their advocates fought long and hard for agricultural employees to receive workers' compensation and other legal worker protections guaranteed for other industries. In re-telling the experiences of Amanda, Lilia and David, Juan, and Aniceta, I highlight how complex layers of vulnerability, power imbalances, legal ineptitude, and structural violence both on and off the farm inhibit or outright prevent these work-injured farmworkers from getting adequate healing and support or any sense of closure or justice.

In this chapter, I argue that current policies and structures within the workers' compensation system are inherently disadvantageous for farmworkers, especially along the lines of race, gender, and documentation status. While most working Americans struggle to navigate and secure benefits from workers' compensation, (im)migrant farmworkers face additional barriers; their workplace illnesses and injuries are contested illnesses as the social and physical worth of farmworkers in U.S. society allows their suffering to be minimized, or denied scientific, medical, and social legitimacy. (Im)migrant farmworkers experience additional forms of social, medical, legal, and workplace marginalization in the transnational context of agricultural migration. Living as an injured worker in the United States, one's embodied experiences, emerging and evolving needs, social, economic, and biological value as a human life are all negated. What is masked by industry power is not just workers in the fields – hidden away within the crevices of picturesque landscapes – but also the experiences of life, sickness, injury, pain, emotional trauma, and death for farmworkers and their families. These realities are actively hidden by agribusiness as an industry as it trains the public to focus on consumer happiness and health through the production and consumption of fruits and vegetables as well as organic products.

Pills and Pains: Amanda

Originally from the Mexican state of Puebla, Amanda hurt her back while engaging in the repetitive motions of washing heavy crates of freshly harvested vegetables in the packing shed of a small organic farm. This job required her to heave 30 to 60 pound plastic crates filled awkwardly and unevenly with produce, dunk them into a tub of cold, bleach-laced water, lift the now 40 to 100 pound wet crates out of the

tubs and place them on racks to dry. Many small organic farms feature a diverse array of crops and tasks that involve different postures and movements. Shifting from different farm work jobs every two hours greatly reduces the risk of occupational injury and also helps keep workers more engaged with their jobs (Strochlic et al. 2008:18-19).

Amanda's farmer employer, Chuck, a.k.a. Carlos, a white man, made a managerial decision that reversed the health benefits of organic farm task diversity. He stationed specific workers in the same repetitive jobs day after day and constantly pushed them to work as fast as possible. This is a centerpiece of Taylorist scientific management, which seeks to improve worker speed and efficiency through repetition and supervision.

After Amanda notified Carlos about her back injury, he told her to go take an ibuprofen, cursing at her in a rough, broken Spanish. Re-injuring herself several months later while completing the same tasks, her boss scoffed at her, "*Muchos problemas contigo,*" (so many problems with you) and told her nastily to go to the local non-profit clinic, Salud Para la Gente, on her own time. Instead, Amanda sought care at her regular doctor at the County Clinic, which she preferred over the long waits and inconsistent treatment at Salud. At this point, Amanda was not only physically injured but emotionally traumatized from the constant verbal abuse from Carlos. She found it difficult to get out of bed as a heavy depression set in. Her only reason to face the day was her young daughter, Nina: a temperamental toddler with an array of special needs including autism, asthma, and a congenital leg deformity that made walking and moving very difficult and painful.

The County Clinic doctors recommended that Amanda take muscle relaxants and pain killers. The muscle relaxants only caused Amanda more discomfort and side

effects of dizziness and nausea. At no point in time did the staff at the County Clinic recommend to Amanda that she file for workers' compensation, even though her physical and emotional injuries were clearly work related. Instead, they referred her to the psychologist on call, who urged Amanda to go on anti-depressants and to collect disability while she took some time off from work to deal with her emotional problems.

Ironically, being away from work made Amanda more depressed and anxious. She needed the income to support her mother, her uncle (who was diabetic and had had both legs amputated), and her three other children who lived together in a *colonia* dwelling just outside of Puebla City.

The arrangement also led to another set of problems and intensified vulnerabilities. Amanda's fake social security numbers, used to process her disability paperwork, came up in an audit. The judge at the Santa Cruz County Department of Social Security and Disability and the auditor, who testified over speaker-phone, demonstrated frustration and skepticism about Amanda's truthfulness regarding her collection of disability payments on a number of fronts. First, each social security card Amanda had used over the last seven years featured a different rendering of her full name: sometimes just first and last, sometimes just her middle name, Lupe, sometimes her mother's maiden name first before her father's last name or vice versa.

Eventually, the judge asked Amanda directly if she had papers. He gave her a few moments to think about the outcomes of answering this kind of question on the record. I accompanied her to the waiting room, where she thought about her options out loud but quietly to me. She decided that because she had not lied throughout the course of the hearing that she should tell the truth even if it risked her deportation. Amanda

tearfully told the judge through her court-appointed translator: “I just want to say, I am an honest person. I haven’t lied to you, or anyone else. I’m a worker. I work hard to support my four kids, one of whom is disabled. I too am disabled. I am who I say I am.” The judge’s facial expression grew more sympathetic but also exasperated. He couldn’t really do anything for Amanda without official evidence of her struggles in hand: paperwork from the clinic and pay-stubs, for example.

The auditor remained silent for the majority of the time as the judge focused primarily on Amanda’s side of the story. Her honesty was not the only thing to go on trial in that court room office. Her actual existence and legitimacy as an injured, and legally and medically wronged person also came under close scrutiny. Excluded from these kinds of cases are the circumstances that lead (im)migrant workers to cross the border without documentation or official permission and to acquire fake social security cards and papers on the black market economy. When the judge asked Amanda where she had gotten her *chuecos* (false social security cards and IDs), she told him about buying them for \$100 in the parking lot of a commercial grocery store in town from an unnamed vendor.

Fortunately, influenced by the story of Amanda’s youngest daughter’s precarious health and family financial situation, the judge ruled that Amanda would not have to pay the state back the money she had collected under fraudulent social security numbers while on disability: approximately \$9,000. More critically, she was not (immediately) reported to ICE for deportation; however the judge warned her that admitting her undocumented status on the record could lead to repercussions later on, especially if she found herself in a court room again.

Eventually, Amanda returned to her job on the organic farm. Several months later, she re-injured herself, falling backwards and succumbing to the weight of a particularly heavy crate of potatoes. This time, she approached Carlos' wife and business manager, Terri, who helped her fill out workers' compensation paperwork and sent her to a workers' compensation clinic: likely, a preferred treatment center under the farmer's insurance plan. There are many clinics located in Watsonville's strip malls and side streets that deal almost exclusively in workers' compensation and urgent care cases. The company doctor ordered a set of X-rays for Amanda, which were inconclusive since X-rays do not show muscle or nerve damage. Other than this, he hardly touched or examined Amanda and only prescribed muscle relaxants at the end of the consultation. As the sole caretaker of her special needs daughter, the muscle relaxants were not a practical solution for Amanda, who needed to remain alert and mobile. The side effects, once again, made Amanda feel even worse, with nausea, headaches, and unbearable dizziness. She stopped taking them after a few days. The doctor did not excuse Amanda from work, despite the fact that she could hardly move without feeling excruciating pain in her back. The aim of many workers' compensation doctors, in collaboration with insurance companies and employers is to get injured workers back to work as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

Oftentimes, this is what the worker wants, too. Unfortunately, the quality of patient care is often sacrificed in the process of evaluating and treating workers' compensation cases. Amanda found herself drifting into a paralyzing depression without the rhythms of work to distract her from her troubles and from the distance that separated her from her mother and children in Puebla. Her boss wasn't always around

to yell at her, and she generally found working on a farm with a view of the river and an abundance of beautiful, organic food pleasant and satisfying work. She developed close bonds with some of her co-workers, but had acrimonious relationships with others amidst accusations of favoritism and unequal distributions of work. Carlos interpreted Amanda's requests with respect to her injury as mere complaining or malingering. He devalued Amanda's claims and concerns under pressure to meet his own production and economic goals, which required that all of his employees work quickly and efficiently through their pains. His demand that Amanda go take a pill demonstrates his disregard for her and his disbelief of the seriousness of her injury. It is also loaded with gendered implications that women don't endure work and pain the way men do.

Armed only with an uncharacteristic determination for relief as well as justice, Amanda sought a second opinion from a chiropractor who also took workers' compensation cases. He gave Amanda a more thorough exam, a note for two weeks of rest from work, and another prescription for a different muscle relaxant. He promised to see her in another two weeks when he would prescribe physical therapy if she didn't feel any improvements. The combination of hands-on care, and the autonomy to choose her own doctor from a list of preferred providers put Amanda at greater ease, as did the more familiar chiropractic approach which resembles the *sobador* (a sort of massage therapist and bone setter, in Mexican folk health practice).

One of Carlos' non-harvesting farm employees recounted to me how the farmer himself rarely made time for his own medical appointments, choosing instead to remain focused on the farm's operations. In fact, the farm family lacked comprehensive health coverage but did purchase traumatic event coverage in case of an emergency or on-

farm fatality. This was a very common and risky scenario amongst many of the smaller-scale farmers I met during the course of my fieldwork who remained uninsured in order to keep their costs down and to be able to continue running their farms. Non-agricultural small-businesses also resist purchasing insurance for themselves as owners or for their employers in order to reduce costs. Inevitably, those costs are passed on to the families and communities who care for injured and ill workers. Unequal access to health care within this single farming business created shared vulnerabilities amongst farmers and farmworkers. Structural vulnerabilities amongst farmers and growers trickled down to farmworker employees producing immense social suffering. It is the violence of capitalism, even if small-scale, organic farming capitalism.

Despite shared vulnerabilities, Carlos had both spoken and unspoken power over the largely undocumented and non-English speaking work crew. As a form of workplace control and discipline, he routinely screamed and cursed at his employees in Spanish, cultivating an environment of fear and anxiety and inhibiting workers for asking even for a sick day let alone filing for workers' compensation benefits as a result of workplace injuries. Amanda's boyfriend (now husband) Uriel, and his cousin, Daniel, often worked in the fields with fevers and colds, as well as back pain. Another co-worker, after suffering a traumatic car collision that caused internal bleeding in his abdominal cavity had to work up a lot of courage to present Carlos with an official doctor's note mandating at least two weeks of rest.

Perhaps the workers' compensation expenses would have hurt this small organic farmer more than a larger grower with corporate contracts, access to credit and loans, and a steadier income. Still, Carlos chose to adopt the same labor management and

workplace organization strategies as his big-scale neighbors. This created a highly pressurized and uncertain work environment and inhibited the adoption of preventative measures, especially those suggested by workers, which might have cost time or money that could have been invested in the farm. Carlos' approach to labor and farm management affected not only the health of his employees, but the health of his business, as injured workers couldn't work the same way that healthy workers could. Still, many continued to work for Carlos because he paid above minimum wage and occasionally offered winter-season work for some crew members. Most had already endured work for larger firms where they felt even more exploited and vulnerable to injury.

When Amanda's partner, Leonardo, who also worked on the farm, hurt his back while laying heavy irrigation pipes in a hurry, he would not approach Carlos for fear that he would be fired. The only time during my fieldwork that he missed work was when I urged him to request time off to attend to a court date for a traffic violation to request a reduced fine. This might mitigate his risk for popping up on ICE's radar in the future, as the Secure Communities or S-Com program had been more actively detaining and deporting people with minor offenses. Amanda had already missed a lot of work over the years in order to attend to her daughter's many health appointments. These ranged in distance from the local County Clinic to specialists in San Francisco. Fortunately for Amanda, most of Nina's health care expenses were covered by a series of state children's insurance programs that provided general health care as well as some specialized care for more serious conditions. Amanda and Nina's experiences in the health care and social services system are discussed in Chapter 4.

Technically, taking time off to attend to a sick family member falls under the Family Medical Leave Act (FaMLA). Attending to Nina should not have counted against Amanda's need to take care of her own health or work related injuries. The law on paper rarely matches farmworkers' health and work experiences. The realities of family and self care do not fit in with the limitations of workers' compensation policies and practices as they neglect the gendered realms of childcare, household responsibilities, and the chronicity of injuries.

Worker Safety, Health, and Compensation in Historical Perspective

Prior to the passage of state-based workers' compensation legislation in the early 1900s, courts decided whether or not employers should be responsible for their injured employees' social and financial welfare post-accident; usually, judges sided with employers. This left tremendous social and economic burdens on workers' families and communities (Fishback 2010; Howard 2001:5). In other instances, the injured or their families were forced to settle out of court, usually receiving far less than would cover the costs of caring for an occupationally disabled loved one, and in the case of work-related deaths, no more than a year's worth of wages (Fishback 2010).

In the past, the only way a worker could collect full compensation for injuries and lost wages was if they could prove the employer's absolute negligence, and this often required that the worker hire an investigator (Jain 2006:18). Employers easily and swiftly contested their liability. They routinely gained exemption from financial responsibility for injured workers if they could prove that a worker knew about the dangers inherent to the job, was intentionally or unintentionally harmed by a co-worker, or if the worker unwittingly caused the accident (Fishback 2010; Jain 2006:18).

In the 1910s, individual states started mandating that employers purchase workers' compensation insurance: finally taking a step towards addressing the high rates of injuries and deaths and subsequent worker and family suffering. High rates of injuries and workplace fatalities prevailed in the railroad, mining, and lumber industries as well as in factories (Starr 1982). Employers wanted to mitigate the uncertainties of cases brought to court (Jain 2006:19). Workers' compensation remained the purview of individual states, as the federal government felt that it could not manage this social welfare program on top of all the others it was in the process of developing, funding and implementing during the Great Depression in the 1930s (Howard 2001). In addition, employers and insurance companies benefited from the state-based arrangements of workers compensation insurance, which brought more business to the insurance companies and protected businesses from unexpected outcomes in the otherwise pro-employer courtroom. Doctors (especially those affiliated with the conservative American Medical Association), employers, and insurers all resisted the nationalization of workers' compensation and health care more broadly, not wanting to relinquish their autonomy and control over their income, businesses, or ways of practicing medicine to the federal government (Starr 1982:200). Policy makers prioritized the nationalization of other welfare programs, and thus, sacrificed opportunities to incorporate workers' compensation and other protections into federal law (Howard 2001:4).

Some companies sought to keep workplace injuries under wraps, and paid company doctors who specialized in industrial medicine to tend to injured workers and conduct pre-employment examinations all geared towards "[keeping] the employee on the job" (Starr 1982:200-201, 203). Such practices also lowered company expenses by

allowing direct control over diagnoses and duration of treatment. According to political historian Howard: "...Workers had to be examined by doctors approved by their employer or the insurance company, leading to claims that the extent of disability was habitually understated. [But] the reverse was also possible" (2001:13). These doctors also spent time examining and redesigning plant layouts and operations in attempt to prevent workplace injuries. Their designs also included features that allowed for more stringent personnel management, and above all else, improving production efficiency (ibid).

These strategies also served to placate workers, and are known collectively as "welfare capitalism," and "corporate paternalism." Starr observes (1982:202):

The advocates of corporate paternalism wanted not only to instill the proper attitudes in workers, but also to spin an elaborate web of affiliations binding them to their companies. Unions might thereby be prevented from gaining a foothold. Medical care functioned as an element in this strategy of control.

Elements of welfare capitalism and corporate paternalism are entrenched in contemporary business and workplace cultures today, including the farm fields and agribusinesses of California. In some cases, there is a sincere concern about reducing harm. At one vineyard, the safety and occupational health personnel allowed farmworkers to vote on the kind of pruning gloves and work boots the company would purchase in order to encourage more workers to wear their personal protective gear. They presented their unique approach to workplace performance, work to keep injuries and accidents off the official record and to discourage employees from filing complaints and workers' compensation claims.⁹

9. Starr (1982) claims that these practices are much less common now: "...The enactment of legal protections for collective bargaining and the accommodation of unions in heavy industry meant the abandonment of company-controlled services as a strategy of work incentives and discipline" (203-04). Perhaps this is true of the

The political and economic power of special interest groups (namely, businesses and insurance companies) consistently overrules popular needs in the realm of workers' compensation (Howard 2001:29-30). To the present day, there is much resistance from these same groups to making any policy changes that would benefit workers and alter the status quo of labor hierarchies and relations.

In the 1970s, the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), a branch of the Department of Labor at the federal level of the U.S. government, made efforts to revisit and reform workers' compensation. "[OSHA] was the first federal regulation to give workers the right to be free from danger" (Jain 2006:19). Most of their suggestions never became laws, remaining voluntary options that few companies adopted into practice (Howard 2001:25). In addition, many government commissions charged with reviewing and reforming policies actively recruit representatives from the insurance industry and private businesses. Ultimately, their involvement hinders most efforts to make improvements for workers (ibid:23). Compounded by recent and routine budget cuts, OSHA's enforcement capacity and power to ensure safe workplaces is rendered null (Jain 2006:19). In addition, not all unions have historically advocated for workers' compensation and workplace safety, focusing on improving wages in the workers' immediate interests (Howard 2001:22-23). While working as a lobbyist with the United Farm Workers, Dolores Huerta successfully petitioned the California government to mandate that all agricultural employers purchase workers' compensation coverage for farmworker employees (Bardacke 2011).

urban industrialism of the 1940s-80s, but corporate paternalism experienced a strong revival in California agriculture in order to combat renewed unionization drives by the United Farm Workers and to create a stronger and more positive public image for agribusinesses via "Corporate Social Responsibility" programs, many of which included farm worker health components. See Chapter 5 for further elaboration on contemporary practices of corporate paternalism in Central Coast farm labor management.

Agricultural Exceptionalism: Raced, Gendered, & Classed

Past and present, the selective denial of fundamental worker rights and protections is tied to embedded racial, class, spacial, and gender hierarchies within agricultural labor. The initial drive for workplace rights came from urban labor organizing, reacting to egregious safety and health risks in factories and manufacturing plants. Urban organizers ignored the plight of rural workers (Wells 1996:70). In the Jim Crow era, Southern growers and politicians wanted to deny labor rights and access to social welfare programs to African Americans – who in the rural south, served as farmworkers and sharecroppers – in order to maintain the segregated status quo in other arenas, like schools and hospitals (Quadagno 2008:77). In the pre-civil war U.S., slaves were also denied health autonomy when it came to work-related injuries.

According to Chamallas and Wriggins (2010:35):

Because slaves were the property of their owners, personal injuries to slaves were treated as injuries to the slaveholder, rather than to the slave. To be recognized in law, the personal injury to the slave had first to be translated into pecuniary loss to the slaveholder.

These race-class hierarchies remain well institutionalized in agriculture today, taking official form through the law and unofficial form in everyday practices and attitudes (known as *de facto* and *de jure* racism, sexism, classism, etc.).

While growers no longer technically own farmworkers, the needs and concerns of agribusinesses are privileged above those of farmworkers because of the economic value of agricultural production, particularly in the state of California. Into the 21st century, there are a number of cases in which labor contractors and traffickers control migrant farmworkers by deducting food and housing costs from their pay, arranging all work, limiting newcomers' access to information, and preventing workers' mobility with

threats of *la migra*. The political organizing efforts of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers included the retelling of detailed horror stories from many indigenous Mexican and Central American Florida tomato farmworkers who were regularly locked up at night, sometimes with chains, to prevent their escape (CIW 2012; Bowe 2007). Some of the farmworkers I met, mostly recounting stories of their first arrivals as children or young adults, told me their own stories of being trapped by the conditions of their informal contracts with FLCs, or in situations of debt servitude for coyote or contractor bills. In one instance, a now 31 year old Triqui man named Omar told me how labor contractors recruited him directly in Oaxaca and transported him to Arkansas on an H2A visa (for agricultural guest-workers) to do tree planting on state forest land. They deducted his food and lodging expenses directly from his check, leaving him with a net pay of around \$10 to \$20 a day, depending on how many trees he could plant at a piece rate. For the duration of the project, Omar had legal residency as a guest worker; however, the fact that such a scheme could take place within a U.S. state-sponsored project demonstrates the difficulty of enforcing labor laws and the ease with which they are broken. Fed up with these injustices and broken promises, Omar and a group of friends migrated to Florida before the termination of their work contract with the Arkansas tree planting supervisor. Their visas expired, but they easily found work picking tomatoes for a foreman who paid them more fairly and treated them with more respect. With this move, there would be permanent marks on their immigration records. One can see how unavoidable all risks are for farmworkers like Omar.

Conventional business culture emphasizes the difficulties in managing risks and costs, and this framing of agribusiness as the victim overshadows the more pervasive

human suffering that results from these quantitative calculations of profits and losses, inputs and outputs. Agribusiness power, combined with support from the insurance, business, and in some cases professional medical lobbies, influences policy makers to make rules and engage in economic reforms that cut desperately needed protections and benefits, or put caps on medical treatment in order to reduce costs to businesses.

While growers' vulnerabilities should not be underestimated or devalued, as emphasized by Wells (1996), Holmes (2007, 2011, 2013), and Benson (2008a, 2008b), they are interconnected but unequal to farmworkers' vulnerabilities, especially when it comes to bodily harm. For example, shortly after my arrival to the field, a producer of organic spouts, Ken Kimes (white, male, organic hero), lost his arm while trying to fix a piece of farm equipment. After being airlifted to a hospital in San Jose, doctors amputated Mr. Kimes' maimed arm, as well as several fingers on his opposite hand. Two weeks later, he was released from the hospital. With much determination and good physical therapy, he returned to work, spending more time on the computer and accounting end of the business and less time growing sprouts.

The press picked up on this terrifying story (Guild 2010). Organic farmers and consumers throughout the region took up collection boxes and hosted \$100 plate dinners to raise money for the expenses not covered by Kimes' emergency medical insurance (totaling near \$40,000, not including post operative recovery and physical therapy). Kimes' friends, colleagues and customers were able to pool their resources and support to fill in for the lack of comprehensive health care coverage. Injured farmworkers and their families must rely on their own limited resources as they are usually uninsured. Whatever coverage they can win from workers' compensation or tort

negligence cases is usually nowhere nearly enough to live off of, especially with long-term medical treatment and the bills that go with it. Farmworkers and their families must navigate what limited health and social services safety nets that are available to them on their own.

California growers may no longer own farmworkers; however, their localized power over the labor force, combined with their economic influence and the political prestige of their lobbyists at the state level positions farmworkers' issues lower on the social, political and economic hierarchy. The confluence of political and economic power resulted in the repetitive vetoing of agricultural worker safety, overtime pay, and collective bargaining legislation by current California governor Jerry Brown despite his past support of farmworker issues.

Justifications of inferior racial, gender, and legal status remain inscribed, in both overt and tacit forms, in the legal policies and workplace ideologies and practices of the present. This is especially clear amidst the most recent wave of anti-immigrant sentiment and exclusionary laws in Arizona (2009), Georgia (2011), Alabama (2011), and Mississippi (2011) to name the most notorious. Coincidentally, Mississippi was the last state in the U.S. to adopt workers' compensation policies, and many of the southern states still exclude farmworkers from workers' compensation protections.

De jure, or legalized means of social exclusion, including those referenced above, affect predominantly low income workers of color, including Latino farmworkers. While California has not yet embraced such overly anti-immigrant policies as those unfolding in Arizona, Georgia and Alabama, *de facto* forms of racism and sexism are alive and well on and off the farm. These patterns include unconscious and at times

unintentional forms of exclusion or discrimination in workers' compensation and other labor regulations that specifically affect farmworkers. Chamallas and Wriggins (2010:5), through their legal, historical, and sociological analysis of tort law¹⁰, demonstrate that women and minorities fare far worse than their white male counterparts when it comes to the valuation and compensation of their work-related injuries. This is in part because there are more women and racial minorities working lower-paid jobs. It is also due to pervasive social constructions about their credibility, emotional stability, and potential to continue contributing to the economy and society (ibid:1-2). People employed in lower-paying jobs receive less disability pay in workers' compensation rulings because of how the official compensation formula is structured around the economic or "market" value of the work and the social value of the worker. The race or gender of a worker can also bias a judge or jury due to preconceived notions about inherent impairments or social illegitimacies that may have contributed to the raced or gendered workers' injury or illness. These ideologies, at times conscious and at times unconscious, also tread dangerously close to socio-biological ascriptions that presume that women and minorities are cognitively impaired or genetically defective (ibid:5).

At the same time, judges and courts are assumed to be race-neutral; the naturalization of inequality makes these race and gender based rulings difficult to detect

10. Workers' compensation and tort law share some important characteristics, but also differ along important lines of the location and cause of the accident. Workers' comp claims are filed through workplaces and explicitly prohibit law suits because of the 'no fault' condition written into the law. Tort claims are filed in reaction to any number of contexts or situations involving intentional or unintentional negligence that leads to individual and or collective harm. "Torts are civil wrongs recognized by law as grounds for a lawsuit. These wrongs result in an injury or harm constituting the basis for a claim by the injured party. While some torts are also crimes punishable with imprisonment, the primary aim of tort law is to provide relief for the damages incurred and deter others from committing the same harms Among the types of damages the injured party may recover are: loss of earnings capacity, pain and suffering, and reasonable medical expenses" (Cornell University Law School 2010).

because their presence is so “subtle” (Chamallas and Wriggins 2010: 29). This as known as “cognitive bias”:

A process that affects the way we value activities, injuries, or other 'things' that, strictly speaking, have no race or gender whether certain types of injuries...or certain types of damages...[they] have been devalued in part because of their cognitive association with women [and or minorities] and women's [and or minorities] activities. (ibid:24, 28)

Chamallas and Wriggins urge that instead of taking the sanctity and neutrality of the law for granted, a more critical approach is required to instigate necessary changes that would stop the persistent and tacit devaluation of work injured or sick women and minorities in the courtroom. This requires us "...to focus attention on “the position of the governed,' on those who are subjected to the law" and "...to look beyond claims of progress to uncover important continuities in [women and minorities'] subordinate status" (ibid:22). I would argue, too, that these assumptions are not merely a matter of psychological conditioning implied by Chamallas and Wriggins' cognitive bias argument. Rather, long-standing power inequalities are rooted in colonial and post-colonial legacies that justified labor hierarchies on the basis of white supremacy (Buck 2001).

All temporarily or permanently disabled workers in the state of California receive two-thirds of their average yearly pay until the workers' compensation doctors and courts decide that a worker is cleared to return to work: either to regular or what is called “light” duties which are hard to come by in agricultural jobs. For farmworkers, one’s pay is not a constant stream of income. Instead, pay rates follow seasonal cycles and flows of production. This means that a farmworker's’ average pay is significantly less than those of employees with year round, steady employment; it is highly variable among individual workers who are paid piece rates. This means that two farmworkers with the same injury could receive completely different and unequal disability payments,

assuming the courts rule in their favor in the first place. It is already difficult to live on a farmworker's salary. Trying to survive on a fraction of farmworker's usual income is even more of a struggle, especially amongst families who are often dependent upon multiple family members bringing in income.

As Chamallas and Wriggins indicate, lawmakers are often far removed from the experiences of the injured minority or female worker, thus they can "...[neglect] to question the gendered [or raced] origins of a particular rule, the gender [and race] implications or consequences of a particular doctrine, or what changes would have been made to avoid or ameliorate gender [and race] disadvantage" (2010:21). Furthermore, "...the failure to compensate is related in part to the difficulty of comprehending injuries that do not have an analogue in the lives of privileged white men" (ibid). In this sense, it is important to respect the differences between a hands-on and social-justice oriented injured farmer like Ken Kimes, and those absentee growers that manage the harvest and business far from the fields, such as the CEOs and CFOs of grower-shipper or product marketing companies. The Reiter family, for instance, owns the berry harvesting company Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC), the grower-shipper company Driscoll's Berry Associates (DBA), and also owns thousands of acres of land in the region upon which they collect millions of dollars in rent. The Reiter heirs, the adult children of the CEOs of RAC and DBA, are stationed in berry growing regions throughout the world, managing the family business outposts in Chile, Mexico and Morocco. They are much more far removed from the fields than the working farmers who still get their hands dirty and experience the many bodily risks of farming in one of the most dangerous occupations.

In addition to race- and gender-based oppression and discrimination at work and within the realms of workers' compensation and social welfare services, the work-injured farmworkers I came to know faced selective disqualification on the basis of citizenship status and through more intimate on-farm relationships. Even though legally, technically, workers' compensation applies to all workers injured on the job regardless of legal status, there are power dynamics that inhibit laws from serving all people equally and fairly. Today, throughout the United States, those who challenge many farmworkers' rights frame their contestation with either overt or subtle references to the unworthiness and inherent moral inferiority and malingering fraudulence of the largely Latino and undocumented farm labor force. This also applies to lower level workers more broadly. As Cullen (2002:49) argues, the structures of labor for blue-, white-, light-blue-collar and 'smock' workers (e.g. hospitality and medical assistants, for example), predispose all to injuries that are under-acknowledged and accounted for because of their positions within the workplace hierarchy. Farmworkers, who do not wear collars, are even more absent from the general literature on workers' compensation. They also face additional social ascriptions, barriers, and contestations that layer with their occupational injury, illness and recovery experiences. In the wake of anti-immigrant sentiment, policies, and economic crises, farmworkers and immigrants more generally are portrayed as a net drain on society and the precariously tight government coffers rather than as net contributors to regional wealth, prosperity, and national food security.

The gradual and late integration of workers' compensation coverage for farmworkers required the mass mobilization of union and civil rights organizers to challenge this and other forms of legalized exclusion and oppression. What follows is a

brief history of farmworkers and workers compensation insurance, as well recent reforms that make all workers, but especially injured women, racial minorities, and undocumented workers more vulnerable and less able to assert the legitimacy of their claims let alone their occupationally injured bodies.

Grower organizations and agricultural companies successfully maintained agricultural exceptionalism on the farm labor front through persistent lobbying of federal representatives and state legislators, strategically framing their morality as good employers as well as their susceptibilities to economic and production uncertainties. These vulnerabilities – tied to market instabilities, climate and pest related crop losses, water and soil depletion, labor shortages, and personal health – are very real, and should not be underestimated (Holmes 2007; Benson 2008a). Their impacts trickle down to farmworkers. Nevertheless, instead of acknowledging shared risks and uncertainties with laborers, the growers whom Wells interviewed insisted:

...That labor protections were unfair and unnecessary in agriculture because labor relations were generally harmonious and farmers were already unduly vulnerable to workers' demands Moreover, it was argued, legal protections were superfluous because labor relations on farms were already family like. (1996:70-71)

Similar arguments echo into the present as California growers, their grower-shipper associations, lobbying, and marketing arms, amass billions of dollars to prevent the institution of even the most basic worker protections and safety measures. Most recently, this included urging state legislators not to pass a law guaranteeing overtime pay for farmworkers, a bill vetoed by Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2010 (Meyerson 2010). Overtime pay has been guaranteed to workers in most other industries.

California farmworkers remained excluded from workers' compensation coverage until 1976 (Wells 1996:71). At this point in history, the United Farm Workers of America

(UFW) gained significant victories through state and nationwide strikes, boycotts and union membership drives, and played a critical role in securing general protections for farmworkers in California agriculture (ibid). In California's lettuce fields in the 1970s, some growers, under the threat of employee unionization via the UFW, preferred to bargain with the Teamsters. Teamsters' contracts neglected most workers' rights, which appealed to the growers and helped prevent UFW gains in the Salinas' Valley (Bardacke 2011). Tensions between the two unions grew even more exacerbated by the conflict between meeting workers' immediate needs for improved wages, and the longer term goals put forward by the UFW: movements for more lasting structural improvements in workplace conditions, safety, and labor relations. Through the UFW-organized grape boycotts in the late 1960s, farmworkers gained pay raises, improved field protections and sanitation, and access to affordable and localized health care (Bardacke 2011; Tejada-Flores 2004). Upon the expiration of those contracts, and under the bargaining pressure of the Teamsters and the growers, UFW farmworkers lost those benefits (ibid.). Bardacke (2011), in his history of the demise of the UFW, notes that political power plays amongst the UFW leadership effectively devalued the contributions of rank and file workers and organizers and hastened the end of a legacy of important gains for farmworker rights. Today, very few farmworkers in California are unionized and none of the farmworkers I interviewed belonged to the UFW.

As the popular and political power of the UFW has demised, the agricultural industry lobbies are stronger, better networked, and more powerful than ever. They hold a strong sway over local, state, national, and transnational food, trade, environmental, and labor laws. To this day, 15 states still lack mandatory workers' compensation

insurance for farmworkers (Barbassa 2010), and only 13 states legally require it (Ogburn 2010). California has developed a reputation as a labor friendly state, even guaranteeing the basic workplace rights of undocumented workers:

To receive a minimum [hourly] wage...to earn overtime pay, with some exceptions [e.g. farmworkers]...To file wage claims...To file workplace safety and health complaints with Cal/OSHA...To work in an environment free from retaliation for exercising their rights (State of California 2012).

But what presents on paper in the realm of policy making is quite distinct from the *de facto* realities faced by undocumented and documented farmworkers as far as their labor and other rights are concerned. There are other powerful relationships beyond the law that shape occupational and other health outcomes on and off the farm. Along with long-standing race, gender, and occupational hierarchies, worker surveillance, processes of medical, scientific and social contestation heighten injured farmworkers' suffering.

Contested Illnesses: Scientific Uncertainties Social Realities

Many analysts claim that the number of industrial injuries has decreased sharply over the past century due to improved safety and health regulations, training, and workplace conditions. The initial push for more worker-friendly workers' compensation coverage was driven in part by the "unbelievably high" (Jain 2006:18) numbers of injured or killed workers.

According to Valention-Parker, agricultural injuries account for only four percent of all work-related accidents or deaths (2006:145). Overall "The agriculture sector has a higher proportion of temporary disability, permanent disability, and death claims compared to all other industries." Minority workers, especially undocumented workers

remain, “undercounted” (Leigh, McCurdy, & Schenker 2001:237) in surveys conducted annually by federal and state-level Departments of Labor. Cullen (2002) observes that the pervasive problem of undercounting occupational injuries and illnesses has systemic roots; more energy and funding is dedicated to protecting consumers from injury from faulty or poisonous products than to protect workers from dangerous or toxic workplaces (53-54). Employers, not external auditors or regulators, are legally responsible for maintaining workplace injury records; however, they have great financial incentives to underreport or disregard workplace injuries and illnesses. This is how statistical erasures are institutionally facilitated, and: “...It is easier for the person recording the injury (typically the owner or manager) to forget or ignore a non-fatal injury than a fatal one” (Leigh, McCurdy, and Schenker 2001:240).

There are few effective checks and balances in occupational health and safety monitoring (Cullen 2002:55). State and federal governments have slashed funding to OSHA and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), as well as to the arms of agencies responsible for monitoring workplace safety. Other erasures occur when acute injuries are counted more often than chronic occupational illnesses which are difficult to trace back to workplace exposures or incidents. This means that “cancer, chemical sensitivity, and reproductive disorders are not being reported, [and] therefore, they are not compiled into the BLS statistics” (Cullen 2002:58).

The structure of workers’ compensation insurance places severe limits on the kinds of injuries and illnesses that count. Claims adjusters and occupational medical specialists are trained to discount the severity of injuries or illnesses that are not obviously (e.g. proven) work related. Jane Wynn, a workers’ compensation lawyer

based in Salinas, who I met during a pro bono Workers' Compensation legal clinic at Watsonville Law Center, explained to me how these denials are made possible. One day at her office, a farmworker's wife sought workers' compensation coverage to pay for her husband's lung cancer treatments. She attributed her husband's illness to long-term exposure to methyl bromide: a highly toxic soil fumigant used in the strawberry fields. Unfortunately, and to some extent inevitably, the lawyers refused to defend this family. They knew that it would be nearly impossible to prove within a 51 percent degree of certainty – the legal threshold for workers' compensation cases – that the man's exposure to pesticides was the primary cause of his cancer. If an entire group of farmworkers with lung cancer came forward, a class action suit could be possible, yet very expensive. In addition the social isolation in farmworker communities and varying degrees of loyalty to employers, as discussed in Chapter 2, makes this a rare occurrence. These processes and methods of contestation are built into the workers' compensation system in order to cap insurance companies' responsibilities to reimburse injured or ill workers so that they can capitalize on premiums paid into the system. This structure also mitigates the agricultural or other businesses' premium rates and expenses.

Decompensation: Structural Vulnerabilities and Syndemics for Injured Farmworkers

As mentioned above, official counts of injured workers are limited; however, accounting for and documenting farmworkers' injuries is exacerbated by other challenges shaped by farmworker-specific vulnerabilities that are produced on and off the farm. These include: (1) the fear undocumented farmworkers have of reporting their injuries to employers or loyalty to employers; (2) underreporting due to incentives

granted to work crews to remain injury free (which creates disincentives for reporting injuries and accidents, period); (3) employers' failure to appropriately file workers' compensation paperwork or to grant a worker's request to make a claim; (4) the difficulty in accessing medical records; (5) the seasonal migration of workers within California and across states and the U.S.-Mexico border; (6) the social pressure in farmworker communities to work through pain and suffering to provide for families; and (7) the varying degrees of employee loyalty to employers fostered by corporate paternalism, a sense of indebtedness or gratitude for having a job, and shared ethnic identities among employers and employees. These structural and social barriers that prevent farmworkers from receiving the appropriate quality and quantity of care and legal assistance for their injuries and illnesses are described in greater ethnographic detail below. The stories of Amanda, Lilia, Juan, and Aniceta demonstrate the embodied suffering and violence induced in part by the current California workers' compensation system. They are compounded by many other social, economic and political vulnerabilities as well as one's status in long-standing race, gender, class, and citizenship hierarchies. These stories also highlight syndemic patterns for injured workers that social scientists, public health, and medical researchers and practitioners should be attentive to in their work with farmworkers so as to avoid the narrow focus on individual injuries and body-part-specific interventions that neglect both the macro structures that contribute to injuries and the micro dynamics of social suffering for the work-injured.

Lilia: ICE on the Injury

I met Lilia at a Catholic church function hosted by the nun in residence to educate women about special state and county programs for uninsured and undocumented children. Lilia had worked nearly a decade in the strawberry fields of Watsonville, starting from her arrival from the West Central Mexican state of Michoacán in 2000. When we met in 2011, she had been working for the past two years at an organic vegetable packing plant.

Lilia was one of many people I met in Watsonville who had an immediate need to tell her story. After bonding over her newborn son and the delicate hand-crocheted sweaters she adorned him in, she invited me over to her brother's home: a nicely furnished doublewide trailer with bedrooms for each of her three nephews. She was temporarily in charge of childcare duties for her brother's family, as *la migra* (the Spanish name for Immigration and Customs Enforcement or ICE) had recently detained her sister-in-law at a deportation center three hours away from Watsonville. Lilia's brother – documented and employed as a foreman at a large strawberry growing firm – now spent most of his time trying to stop his wife's deportation. I could tell that I provided a much needed distraction for Lilia, who herself was feeling the stress of the situation in caring for her own two boys in addition to three traumatized children between the ages 1 and 10.

Lilia told me the story of her husband, David, who used to work full time on a seasonal basis in the strawberry fields. During a workplace raid by *la migra*, her husband ran for his life to hide in a nearby storage shed, but fell into an irrigation ditch and damaged his knee. He did not receive adequate medical care for fear of drawing more attention to his employer, which could result in him losing his job. Now, he works

two separate jobs: half-time in the strawberry fields and half time at a compost plant. Part time status means he is ineligible for what few workplace benefits exist for farmworkers. David's injured knee can no longer withstand a full week of stoop labor. There are times when he experiences so much pain and stiffness that his wife must literally unbend his body so that he can get out of a car, a chair, or their bed. This is one reason why Lilia sought work at the packing plant; although she only worked seven months out of the year, the job provided comprehensive health care benefits that helped her family immensely.

At 30 years of age, Lilia too suffered from knee pain as a result of constant standing in the cold packing house and shoulder pain from the repetitive motions of sorting delicate baby lettuce leaves on a fast paced assembly line. She attributed her regular migraines, which flared up during the work season, to regular exposure to chlorine bleach. This is used in a diluted solution to remove dirt and debris from the fresh produce so that it is market ready. It also helps mitigate the spread of pathogens like E-Coli. An outbreak can bring economic devastation to an industry and tarnish the reputation of a specific product, like Spinach. In 2006, E-Coli bacteria contaminated bagged spinach packaged by Earthbound Farms (Rosenwald and Mui 2006), and sales of this product took six years to recover (Hornick 2013). The bleach fumes waft through the air along with the residues of ammonia-based solvents and industrial-strength cleaning fluids that are used by the night cleaning crew (mostly men) to sterilize and maintain the factory machinery and equipment. While the unionized cleaning crew held a strike to protest their routine exposure to noxious chemical fumes, the women working the assembly line lacked union representation let alone the outside awareness or

support necessary to organize a strike or to collectively bargain for systemic workplace changes. Instead, they coped with their struggles by sneaking small amounts of lettuce off the line and into their apron pockets to be consumed by their families at home. This was a practice prohibited by company policy due to food safety regulations, but also served as a means of disciplining line workers.

Besides taking disability leave for the birth of her youngest son, Lilia has never requested time off of work or filed for workers' compensation. She has seen doctors (covered by the company's regular health plan) to get prescription relief for her migraines. The packing house where she works features an outside clinic to attend to their employees, a business practice that will be described in more detail in Chapter 5. When she has extra cash, Lilia goes to see a *sobador*, an unlicensed Mexican folk healer who integrates massage and musculoskeletal manipulation to relieve pain. *Sobadores* usually charge less than conventional chiropractors and massage therapists: around \$25 to 30 dollars per session as advertised on billboards and brochures left strategically at laundromats and *panaderias* (Mexican bakeries) that are routinely frequented by farmworkers.

When Lilia worked in the strawberry fields, she suffered a miscarriage: the loss of her middle child, a daughter. She and other farmworker women whom I interviewed referred to their miscarried or stillborn children when composing kinship charts with me, valuing their places on the family tree as much as those held by living and growing children. Neither these nascent lives nor those of slowly deteriorating farmworkers and packing house workers are valued or counted in the injury and death tolls. This prevents necessary proactive measures from being taken and allows companies to continue

profiting while denying responsibility for the problems their business and workplace practices create. As Cullen (2002:54) acknowledges, “No other public health issue...is treated as cavalierly as occupational health and safety.” In Lilia’s case, her immigration status, her exclusive access to an onsite company clinic for treatment of her work-induced migraines, her place in an assembly line designed by theories of scientific management versus ergonomics, her lack of union protection, and her roles as a mother, wife, and extended family caretaker amidst severe social and physical stress and pain, all comprise a series of layers of vulnerability.

Aniceta

While picking peas in the hot sun of the southern Salinas Valley, 35 year old Aniceta – a women who speaks Mixteco – suddenly felt dizzy and fatigued. It was 10 in the morning, only three hours into the very long work day. She felt her heart beating uncontrollably fast in her chest. Noting her profuse sweating, a coworker advised her to go sit in the shade and drink some water. She advised the foreman about her condition. He ignored her as he had earlier in the day when she made a general inquiry about where in the field he wanted her to work. Aniceta routinely experienced this kind of neglect from the male foremen. She knew she was not one of the *preferidas*, or female favorites who got all of the positive attention as well as the best picking spots. Some women took advantage of this status, acquiring lighter jobs on particularly hot days or getting extra pounds added to their piece rate tallies.

While heading over to the side of the field to rest, one of Aniceta’s *paisanos* (a fellow Mixteco from her home *pueblo*) gave her some of his water, but only after teasing her for asking him so forwardly (as this is not the gendered custom). Under the paltry

shade of a lone tree off to the side of the field, Aniceta faded in and out of consciousness. Eventually, the female supervisor on duty put Aniceta in her car and drove her to the gas station, where she tried to force feed her Gatorade. At that point, Aniceta was well beyond the point where self rehydration would have been of any help. The supervisor then drove to an urgent care clinic in Soledad about 45 minutes from the field. This clinic is likely the one that the farm labor contractors were instructed to use in case of on-the-job injuries or emergencies.

The intake nurse on duty that day immediately recognized the symptoms of a pending heat stroke and angrily asked the supervisor why she had failed to call an ambulance in the first place. The supervisor lied and claimed that Aniceta had refused to be taken to the hospital. Horrified at Aniceta's now critical condition, the nurse dialed 9-1-1. In the ambulance, on the way to the hospital in Salinas (another 30 minutes away), Aniceta's heart developed life-threatening irregular rhythms and then stopped. Paramedics and doctors shocked her back to life several times, but the permanent and life altering damage had already been done. For the rest of her life, Aniceta will wear a pacemaker and must make frequent visits to a cardiologist and other specialists.

Technically, through a combination of legal and medical measures and loopholes, Aniceta's case does not qualify for workers' compensation insurance. Her employer's failure to respond promptly to her emergency medical problem at work means that Aniceta could sue them for negligence: a tort case. At the time of this writing, Aniceta is working with a team of lawyers; however, this is really challenging for her to pursue as a woman without much reliable family support, no car, and as a speaker of an indigenous language.

Aniceta navigated her way around the area health care system – a series of hospitals, labs, tests, doctors, and nurses – that attended to her heart condition. Many other health problems have developed since both she and her heart stopped working, including diabetes, chronic pain on her left side close to the incision site, dizziness, depression, anxiety, and fatigue. For each doctor and legal visit, which range in frequency from once or twice a week to once every four months, Aniceta must board a public bus and endure an hour and a half long bus ride to Salinas. “Before I fell [referring to her heart illness], I never had heart problems, never got sick,” she says, lamenting not only her weakened heart and overall frailty, but also her inability to work in the fields or at home. Aniceta now depended on her eldest daughter, Margarita, to help tend to her younger children: two boys ages 8 and 12. Her husband, Bernardo became the primary income earner for their family and did not handling the pressure well. He often accused Aniceta of uselessness; he did not believe she was no longer able to work in the fields or do heavy household work. Already a heavy drinker, his problem drinking intensified alongside Aniceta’s stagnated recovery. She often called me, fed up with Bernardo's belligerent emotional abuse, threatening to move out as soon as she could. The prospect of separating from Bernardo, however, proved more difficult in reality without any income or support to facilitate a permanent relocation both physically and financially.

Aniceta saw four different sets of doctors in four different medical centers, none of which did a good job communicating with one another by sharing new information, test results or prescription records among themselves. None of the locations offered Mixteco translation nor asked Aniceta what her first language was; they all assumed

she spoke fluent Spanish and marked this on her chart without further thought. Both the lack of communication among medical care providers and inadequate (though, in some cases, well-intentioned) communication with Aniceta caused many problems. Her primary health care providers worked from the local clinic in Greenfield, which is a satellite of an area county hospital. Her cardiac surgeon worked at one hospital in Salinas, but her cardiologist, who was responsible for monitoring her condition, ordering blood work and tests, and adjusting her medications, was based at a different, competing hospital in the same city.

After an initially promising recovery immediately following her accident, in which her heart recovered 60 percent of its strength in 6 months, her cardiologist sent her back to work. He based his decision on an echocardiogram exam, a typical medical diagnostic tool. This evidence was used to justify Aniceta's removal from temporary disability payments and leave and her return to the same workplace where she had nearly died only months before. This conclusion, however, contradicted Aniceta's embodied experiences of perpetual weakness, fatigue, and pain in her arm and shoulder, and in the muscles surrounding her incision site. Her pain remains undiagnosed despite a visit to an orthopedic specialist, who Aniceta refers to as *el doctor de los huesos* (bone doctor). Despite the fact that Aniceta did not feel fully recovered, and expressed this to the doctors and nurses that attended to her, the cardiologist in particular felt that he had no other choice but to send Aniceta back to work with instructions that she stay well hydrated and assume lighter duties.

Eager to start earning wages to support her family even though she also felt anxious about whether or not she could handle the grueling pace, Aniceta returned to

work only to find that she could not physically handle it. After a conversation with her supervisor, she received permission to do lighter work in the shaded sorting area of the pea field. However, once again, her foreman ignored her initial request. Instead, he continued to give his *preferidas* the lighter jobs, despite having received an official notice from the supervisor that Aniceta's needs be met first.

Fortunately, the season ended shortly after Aniceta attempted to return to work. Still, her inability to earn a living perpetually frustrated her. She sat at home in pain and discomfort, unable to tend to her kids and grandkids, and struggled to keep up with household cleaning and cooking expectations. She struggled with sadness (*tristeza*) and *nervios* (a holistic sense of unease of the mind, body, and spirit) about an uncertain future. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills piled up, only some of which have been covered either by her employer's insurance or Emergency MediCal.

Aniceta's illness is acknowledged by her doctors, but they negated her embodied experiences and suffering when they sent her back to work despite her expressions of concern and doubt. Her illness is contested in her household, as Aniceta's husband takes out his emotional, and sometimes physical, aggression, on her and their children. It is contested yet again when Aniceta seeks medical advice from the local clinic in town, where her doctors refused to sign her disability renewal paperwork and failed to advise her on how to proceed. Instead, they prescribed over-the-counter pain medications, a combination of Tylenol and Alieve, which did not alleviate Aniceta's pain. Their side effects created additional problems, namely abdominal pain. The local pharmacy was either unwilling or unable (or both) to provide prescription warning labels

in Spanish but did print out long-winded technical explanations in Spanish and English for each drug.

Oftentimes, occupational illnesses are contested in the field of industrial medicine as a matter of scientific skepticism, which is more often than not is the result of industry pressure. In Aniceta's case, all of her doctors refused to attribute her heart condition to work on the grounds that they could not be certain of the root cause. Her test results and exams revealed both a cardiomyopathy, or weakening of part of the heart, as well as an irregular heart beat (an arrhythmia). The doctors claimed that the cardiomyopathy could not have been caused directly by the heat stroke, but was likely exacerbated by it.

During one of the visits to her cardiologist, I gave Aniceta a ride and accompanied her into the exam room with her consent to see if I could get a sense of how her doctor justified not signing her disability leave renewal paperwork. This whole ordeal of getting these papers signed caused Aniceta a lot of anxiety and uncertainty: *¿Qué voy hacer?* What am I going to do? was a typical reprieve expressed in times of utter hopelessness.

During this visit, Aniceta's cardiologist, Dr. Sen, did a thorough exam and evaluation, as her most recent echocardiogram showed a marked decrease in her heart strength. The ultrasound technician that Aniceta saw the week before hinted to us that these results would likely convince the doctor to sign her disability renewal papers. This decreased measure might explain why Aniceta had been feeling so dizzy, fatigued, and otherwise miserable. Between December and February, 2012 she was bussed to the emergency room three separate times after experiencing vision loss, dizziness, and

heart palpitations. Each time, she received shocks from her pacemaker defibrillator: an experience that caused her great pain and fear.

Dr. Sen confided to me that he saw many cases like Aniceta's, wherein farmworkers between the ages of 30 and 65 developed severe heart conditions. Although he suspected that pesticides could be acting as "cardio toxins", he could not make a concrete conclusion to that end. As a medical doctor, he is under an obligation to base his diagnoses on certainties that cannot always be deduced from biomedical evaluations. For injured and ill workers, this meant that their cases are contested if a doctor is not convinced that the injury or illness is at least 51 percent caused by conditions or accidents at work. These numbers are critical for the awarding of continued workers' compensation, and temporary or permanent disability benefits. However, their semblance of objectivity is quite distant from workers' realities.

Compounding Aniceta's risks and suffering was the fact that she is undocumented. She risked deportation by collecting disability benefits on her fake social security ID, even though she worked in the fields for over a decade and contributed to the national coffers through pay check deductions. When I asked the nurse if there was a county-sponsored hospital shuttle that could provide Aniceta with transportation to her appointments, she gave us some cautionary advice. Without making any assumptions, she informed me, in English, that Aniceta would have to be careful about which kinds of assistance she sought, as these social safety nets faced routine audits which could lead to incarceration and deportation back to Mexico if one was found to be undocumented. Given the severity of her condition, Aniceta knew that returning to Oaxaca would probably lead to her death: a thought that gives her considerable distress when

contemplating her family's future. Upon first migrating, she had no intentions of staying in the U.S. indefinitely.

There are no therapeutic humanitarian clauses in U.S. immigration policy, like those described by anthropologist Ticktin in France (2006). Even with a policy of “medical humanitarianism”, the French government exercises the power to choose which cases are most severe and which patients deserve medical asylum. As a consequence, all sick undocumented residents of France “end up trading in biological integrity [control over their health] for political recognition” (ibid:33). In the U.S., newspaper articles recounted the horror stories of sick but stable undocumented immigrants being deported after receiving hospital treatment only to deteriorate and in some cases die in their home countries (Sontag 2008). In France, “The French state felt it could not deport people if their deportation had consequences of exceptional gravity, such as their deaths,” (Ticktin 2006:33). In the U.S., no legal exceptions are made in immigration cases regardless of the severity of a person's illness. A wave of “clicktivism” (internet based petitions) instigated several pleas to stop the deportations of hospital-bound undocumented immigrants. They and their families are situated in the liminal zones between death, illness, and the possibility of cure and recovery. Meanwhile, hospitals, facing tight budgets and public scrutiny of the use of public funds, threatened to report undocumented patients to ICE, arguing their need to exercise austerity measures for the good of the hospital and other, deserving, citizen patients. This was especially common for patients who required expensive procedures with long term recoveries, such as organ transplants (Sankin 2012). There are now public demands for more medical humanitarianism for undocumented immigrants in the United States, but these

pleas face staunch opposition from anti-immigrant politicians and their supporters, as well as financially struggling health care facilities.

There are ergonomic research programs at UC Davis and Berkeley, and non-profit think tanks like AgSafe and the California Center for Rural Studies contemplating ways to reduce hazards and harm for farmworkers; but their audiences are limited. A big focus has been on heat illness and death prevention in the wake of the deaths of hundreds of farmworkers in California's Central Valley. Activism for heat protections for farm and other vulnerable workers (e.g. construction and road workers) gained more momentum following the death of an indigenous and pregnant 17 year old farmworker Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez in 2008, whose story is recounted in Chapter 1. Despite the passage of these policies in 2004, by 2007 “state labor inspectors found more than half of the employers they audited were violating the rules” that required them to provide adequate rest breaks, shade structures and water to hydrate and cool every worker, as well as prohibitions on working in extreme temperatures for too long (Khokha 2008).

There are a minority of growers, pesticide applicators, foremen, agribusiness human resources and safety engineering and management personnel who make a conscious effort to keep up with occupational safety rules and protections. They include the people I observed and engaged with at the 2011 and 2012 AgSafe conferences. Still, even amongst those actively attempting to prevent workplace injuries and accidents, there I observed a deeply ingrained fear and resentment of government enforcement agencies that are responsible for monitoring and enforcing safety and environmental laws: from ICE to OSHA. One woman I met while volunteering at the AgSafe conference, worked for a food safety auditing firm. She remarked that she was

often the recipient of this resistance and hostility. The people in charge at the farms and processing plants she visited and inspected felt victimized by fines for minor or unintentional violations, which added up over time. Based on her experiences, however, there were plenty of instances in the history of her career in which she observed glaringly negligent health and safety violations that could have caused serious harm if left unaddressed. The institutionalization of neglect is facilitated by business-driven policy reforms at the state and federal levels that weaken safety precautions as well as workers' compensation coverage and care.

Schwarzenegger and Company Re-write the Law

The 2004 election of former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger followed the beginnings of an economic recession as well as ballooning costs of workers' compensation insurance, and health care more generally. This affected the profits of both employers and insurers. The governor framed the situation as a "workers' compensation crisis" (Valention-Parker 2006:143), taking his policy cues from insurance companies and employers who claimed to be in financial turmoil. California could not afford to be economically uncompetitive amidst the recession, as companies facing the rising costs of doing business threatened to leave the state, taking important jobs and opportunities for state-based economic growth with them (ibid).

With the blessings and lobbying dollars of the insurance industry and businesses large and small, Schwarzenegger instated drastic austerity measures and reformatted workers' compensation policies in order to reduce costs to employers and insurers. The social and economic costs that resulted were inevitably transferred to workers, their families, and their communities (Cullen 2002), and to U.S. taxpayers (Valention-Parker

2006). This broad base of people and workers includes undocumented immigrants who contribute tens of billions of dollars to state and federal programs through paycheck deductions and income and sales taxes (Vargas 2012; Chan 2012; Lantigua 2011; Immigration Policy Center 2011).

Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 899 (SB 899) into law in 2004 and fast-tracked its implementation, giving insurance companies and their employer clients immediate economic relief and significantly more power over workers' health and compensation outcomes. Jane Wynn explained that SB 899 severely restricted, trimmed, or outright canceled benefits, and further reduced patient autonomy and privacy. The establishment of utilization review boards in the insurance companies, which Schwarzenegger insisted would help cut costs and save businesses money, required that teams of insurance managers, claims adjusters, and occupational medicine specialists evaluate each request for treatment, medication, surgery, or therapy. If a worker decided to take an employer and or the insurance company to court on the basis of failure to provide adequate compensation, the worker's entire life would be subject to scrutiny by employer defense attorneys and judges. Jane described how insurance companies would hire private detectives to park outside of injured farmworkers homes and photograph and videotape them doing chores and tasks. This evidence would be used in court to disprove the severity of a worker's claim.

In the past, doctors' recommendations as well as patients' objective (e.g. motion loss, muscle atrophy), subjective (e.g. pain, numbness), and observed occupational limitations related to specific jobs helped determine individualized and specialized treatment protocols as well as the financial compensation for lost income in the short

and long term (Valention-Parker 2006:155). Now, workers are evaluated based on a static set of measurements designed by the American Medical Association, known as 'impairment descriptions' (Valention-Parker 2006:156). Each impairment description is assigned a percentage, which determines the amount, duration, and kind of medical treatment and disability payments that a worker can receive. This system prevents injuries from being analyzed and understood as complex and evolving over time. It also compartmentalizes body parts so that pain in one part of the body is analyzed in isolation from the effects of that pain or disability on other parts of the body. Back pain and injuries, for instance, are extremely debilitating and can take a long time to heal because the spine is a primary support structure for the entire body. Injuries to one area of the body may lead to the deterioration of other body parts. An example would be overuse of one side of the body as one attempts to compensate for loss of strength and mobility on the other side as a result of an injury.

During our interview, Jane explained to me that prior to Schwarzenegger's reforms, it was much easier for her firm's farmworker clients to access the appropriate care and sufficient financial support they needed during their recovery. She remarked that according to the American Medical Association Guidelines (5th edition), "pain" cannot be categorized as a disability; it can only be used to justify a work adjustment (e.g. no heavy lifting, x amount of days off before returning to work, light duty). Not all injuries are visible through the tests that workers' compensation doctors typically order. Muscle and nerve damage, for instance, will not show up on an X-ray, and it is not always guaranteed that a doctor will order other, more extensive and expensive tests to diagnose the problem beyond what the worker describes as "pain" or "numbness."

Workers compensation doctors use their exams and patient evaluations to calculate the percentage of the body that is rendered disabled by the injury. Back injuries are routinely categorized between 1-8 percent, despite the severity of discomfort and their impacts on workers' functionality and productivity both at and away from work. Rarely is anyone categorized as 100 percent disabled. Jane commented that even Terri Schaivo, the Florida woman who lived in a vegetative state for many years before the courts ruled that her husband could take her off of life support, would not have been categorized as 100 percent disabled since she was still, technically, alive. These “cookie-cutter” style evaluations really do not allow patients to receive the care they need for the time that they need it. In the past, Jane recalled that if a doctor recommended a hot tub and 20,000 visits to the chiropractor, the insurance companies had no choice but to cover it. Now, the trend in insurance is to debate what costs are medically necessary and to resist paying for even the most basic medicines, treatment protocols, and medical consultations. Those responsible for evaluating an injury include the workers' compensation doctor who sends his or her evaluation to a panel of insurance personnel along with other doctors known as the Qualified Medical Examiners (QME). Ultimately, the members of this utilization review board panel, without ever having met the patient, are responsible for making medical and life changing decisions for the injured worker.

Certainly, Jane thought, this process must cost insurance providers and others involved in the process more time and money in the name of preventing fraudulent claims; however, Schwarzenegger claimed that this new system would save employers and the state money. As utilization review boards deliberated treatment regimens and

disability payments, injured farmworkers in desperate need of care waited in a legal limbo for people far removed from their lives and cases to come to a conclusion about their health. Because money is already tight in farmworker families, workers were unlikely to pursue treatment unless it was certain that the workers' compensation insurance will cover it.

Other changes to workers' compensation law instigated by Schwarzenegger included drastic reductions in permanent disability payments. Disability payments are also based on an evaluation of the percentage of one's body that is disabled. This means that with a back injury that prevents someone from going to work for their rest of their lives, the injured worker will receive 1 to 8 percent of the average salary earned when the injury occurred. This amount does not adjust over time to reflect cost of living increases or raises in the economic value of said job. A farmworker's salary fluctuates throughout the year with seasonal peaks in harvesting, changes in the piece rate, and long periods of unemployment. The average salary for a farmworker will not represent one's highest potential earnings and thus will be even more greatly reduced when it comes to determining the amount of one's disability payment. SB 899 also drastically reduced the number of chiropractic, physical or occupational therapy sessions a person could receive, and allowed for greater employer control over pre-selecting preferred medical providers who work closely with insurance companies (GEK Law 2012).

There are a number of structural and social barriers that inhibited workers from filing workers' compensation claims or prevented them from gaining the maximum amount of health care coverage or compensation that they need. Some employers failed to secure workers' compensation insurance and passed on the economic burdens

of injury treatment directly to workers. Others failed to let employees know about these benefits. Still others threatened informed workers that asked to file claims with termination or refused to accommodate injured workers who returned to work in need of lighter duties. In farm work, sometimes, there is no such thing as light duty, especially during the peak harvesting seasons. It is fairly easy for employers to claim that they are laying workers off for economic reasons, legally justifying the termination of a recently injured worker. Many farmworkers, like Amanda's co-workers, decided to work through their pain rather than ask an employer to file a claim for fear of being fired and or deported. Many, like Aniceta and Amanda, grew frustrated with the long drawn out and difficult to navigate legal processes as well as the risks of collecting needed benefits using fake social security numbers. People like Juan, whose story is retold below, who have papers and can collect some income from Social Security Disability Insurance, lived precariously as these payments were not nearly enough to cover the costs of caring for a family, let alone to pay for the expenses of treating one's ailments and illnesses. All of these layered vulnerabilities are compounded by a lack of enforcement of workers' compensation laws, and the current piece rate pay structure for workers' compensation attorneys (who only get paid if they win a case).

Workers' compensation lawyers used to be compensated more fairly, receiving 10 percent of all awarded benefits, making it far more likely that farmworkers could secure decent representation if necessary, even with challenging cases. Now workers' compensation attorneys are only paid 10 percent of court winnings only when a permanent disability settlement is awarded. As a result, some lawyers were unwilling to take on small-time cases that did not guarantee a large settlement or payment of

medical and lost salary benefits. A swell of unlicensed and shark-lawyers have emerged in agricultural towns, taking advantage of the lack of legal and English/Spanish literacy amongst farmworkers. They promised to represent farmworkers upon receipt of thousands of dollars worth of payments, and then disappeared. The conservative reforms of 2004, from limits to care to attorney compensation requirements, are causing severe harm to and perpetuating suffering for farmworkers in particular and further deterring their access to care and legal justice (Valention-Parker 2006).

Workers' compensation laws vary from state to state, inhibiting injured migrant workers in particular from getting appropriate medical attention, if any at all. There is no formal link between U.S. And Mexican health care or coverage providers, although efforts are being made to facilitate these connections through applied research and policy coalitions (González Block et al. 2011). These structures also deepen the many economic and social disparities related to post-accident rehabilitation, which reverberate from the injured body to stress and strain on the workers' family members and co-workers. In Amanda and Aniceta's cases, the strain extended bi-nationally, as following their injuries, they could no longer afford to send remittances home to help their mothers and other family members out with their own medical expenses. Aniceta's mother suffered from asthma but also took care of a lot of her grandchildren whose parents had migrated to the U.S.

The rules and regulations governing workers' compensation are so complex that many workers remain un- or under-informed about how they work, or more often than not, don't work. In the farm fields of California, one can usually see the plywood boards set up near the entrances to a worksite, plastered with occupational laws and

regulations in English and Spanish; but these too are relatively useless at informing workers about workers' compensation since many farmworkers lack basic literacy skills or are not uniformly informed of new laws or changes to longer standing regulations.

Upon meeting Moises at a migrant education parent meeting, he told me about his pesticide poisoning in 2010, which resulted in a fierce rash, intense itching, and nerve damage throughout his right arm. Even though his employers gave orientations and printed out employee manuals each year emphasizing the importance of reporting all injuries and illnesses to supervisors, this did not guarantee that employers would follow through on a compensation case, or that the doctors selected by the company insurance policy would adequately diagnose and treat the workers. In Moises' case, the human resources staffer that wrote up his intake paperwork for his visit to a local workers' compensation clinic falsified some of the information by downplaying the level of discomfort Moises had originally reported. The doctor admitted that his case was serious, but did not take blood or urine samples. Instead he gave Moises a cortisone injection, prescribed a steroid cream and an over the counter antihistamine to alleviate the symptoms of the initial bodily reaction to being exposed to toxins. Nothing has been done to treat the prolonged nervous system damage that Moises continues to endure. Because it was not formally diagnosed, there was no evidence that Moises still had lingering health problems and disabilities, or that these problems could be linked to his poisoning. Thus, few lawyers have agreed to take his case as they know that the company's lawyers will more likely win and relieve themselves of any responsibility for Moises' care. Furthermore, Moises has been blacklisted from the company he worked for when he was poisoned because he sought additional legal assistance and would not

let the case drop as the employers desired. Even for someone like Moises – who kept all of his paperwork from the traumatic ordeal in a file folder, and intently researched everything he could about workers' compensation law as well as pesticide poisoning and regulations – legal or even social justice, let alone peace of mind and closure, are unbearably hard to achieve.

Malingering: The Syndemics and Chronicity of Injured Farmworker Bodies

Many farmworkers employed in the commercial berry and vegetable enterprises felt selectively surveilled or ignored by their employers. In the case of workplace injuries, a claim may be filed, but upon expressing the need for additional care and recovery, most employers and many of the doctors hired to evaluate workers' compensation claims simply interpreted these requests as *malingering*. This derogatory term implies that injured workers had in fact recovered and were simply trying to squeeze the company, or the state in the case of SSDI benefits, for as much paid time off as possible.

The word, malingering, came up numerous times in my conversations with the heads of health and safety departments, workers' compensation doctors, and insurance providers at the AgSafe conference. A few of the workshops geared towards workers' compensation education for employers included basic overviews of the laws and requirements, but also strategies to prevent workers' compensation fraud, and how to conduct an investigation to ensure the legitimacy of a worker's claim before paying out. Among the techniques covered were the following: a mini-lesson on the psychology of body language as a lie detection strategy, and the hiring of private investigators by the insurance companies. One of the presenters, who is now a defense lawyer making a

living by assisting growers and business owners on their end of workers' compensation cases, had once worked for an insurance company as a private investigator. He followed workers home, taking photographs of them clandestinely, all to build up evidence against the workers' claims of injury or illness.

Malingering implies that a worker is taking advantage of the system; however, according to the workers' compensation lawyers I interviewed and Cullen (2002), the system of compensation does not provide enough livable benefits to make this arrangement worthwhile for most workers, regardless of whether they are low or high wage workers. In their experiences, and based on my observations and interviews, most injured farmworkers wished to return to work as soon as they felt fully recovered so that they could make enough money to support their families in the U.S. and Mexico. A severely scaled back income, in addition to the added toils of confusing paperwork, invasive medical evaluations and court proceedings, are not worth the effort it takes to prolong the receipt of benefits. In some cases, farmworkers are sent back to work before they have fully recovered and healed. Their workers' compensation doctors sign off on paperwork indicating that the worker is healed. In other instances, farmworkers push themselves to go back to work before they have fully recuperated because they cannot survive on a workers' compensation reduced income.

Holmes noted these disparities in the contexts of the farm workplace and the clinic. One of his acquaintances from the field, a Triqui farmworker, was passed off from doctor to doctor, receiving an entirely different explanation for the diagnosis of his knee pain each time (2007:52). Some doctors refused to treat this patient or to sign his paperwork because they assumed the farmworker lied about his pain in order to

continue collecting workers' compensation insurance (ibid). His employers also negated his experiences and needs by failing to initially take his concerns about his health seriously, and then refusing to accommodate him with lighter work.

I met many farmworkers, who out of frustration and desperation, continued to work, despite severe discomfort and pain resulting from under, or un-healed injuries. Those who could not continue working, like Juan and Aniceta, developed deep depression and anxiety. This is a syndemic effect entailing "...the synergistic interaction of two or more coexistent diseases and resultant excess burden of disease" (Singer and Clair 2003:423).

Rather than blaming the victim, a more appropriate theorization and understanding of work-related injuries and illnesses would be the models of syndemics (referenced above) and chronicity. Both are concepts mobilized by critically applied medical anthropologists, who:

[Understand] health issues within the context of encompassing political and economic forces that pattern human relationships, shape social behaviors, condition collective experiences, re-order local ecologies and situate cultural meanings, including forces of institutional, national and global scale (Singer et al. 1992:78-79).

Malingering bears derogatory connotations that the person expressing the latent or continuing effects of their occupational illness or injury is looking to take advantage of the system. Biomedical understandings of bodies and healing, presume an artificial "linearity" to the progression and regression of both chronic and acute conditions.

Manderson and Smith-Morris urge that:

We need also to be critical of the paradigms that govern diagnosis, treatment, and survival, with the imprecision, elisions, and slippages that occur in reference to chronic disease, with the presumptions of consistency in patterns of disease, and in the capacity for its management and control (2010:2-3).

Indeed, my observations of and conversations with farmworkers throughout the course of my fieldwork highlighted the weaknesses of prescribed protocols for specific injuries, which also neglected the interactions between different diseases and social situations. Rigid standards of treatment that reduce pain and disability to percentages deny the human experiences and realities of work related injury and illness, as well as the cyclical trajectories of pain and suffering as they layer with other vulnerabilities and inequalities that inhibit healing.

The concept of chronicity challenges biomedical notions of stability as well as the artificial dichotomy between acute and chronic conditions. The integration of these structures into legal frameworks and workplace policies:

...Has had a political use, directing research, shaping insurance policies, investing in hospitals and pharmaceutical advances, and the like. The associated representation of conditions as either/or, patterned predictably on a 'natural history of disease,' denies the fluidity of life states that are simultaneously biological and socialhospital services, insurance companies, and pharmaceutical industries share a particular interest in maintaining this disease paradigm, since existing profits already flow from it (Manderson and Smith-Morris 2010:3, 7).

So, too, do corporations benefit from these existing structures of vulnerability.

Employers' and insurers' obligations are capped after a predetermined time frame has passed from the point of injury to the company doctor and insurance determined point of recovery. With certain occupational diseases, the link between the worker's injured or ill body and the conditions of labor are systematically denied or rendered uncertain or unclear. This allow employers, insurance companies, company doctors, and policy makers to place the burdens of responsibility for recovery directly on the workforce (ibid:7). Workers' experiences are not usually the point of departure for treatment regimens in the case of occupational injuries and illnesses.

Even though workers' compensation is technically a no-fault system, the root causes of injury and illness are rarely addressed, since "the discourse keeps intervention efforts focused on diagnosis- and treatment-related aid, rather than on the structures of a healthy society that [effect] population health" (ibid:10). Indeed, the structural violence of workplace conditions, qualities, and relationships perpetuates cycles of injury and illness to the detriment of workers, their families, and their communities. "Inequalities of all kinds...are compounded by disease and the experiences of chronic illness and disability" (ibid:15-16).

Juan: Under Water, Under the Knife

In 1990, while working for a then unionized lettuce harvesting company (now swallowed and de-unionized by a larger grower-shipper firm FreshMix), Juan felt a painful twinge in his lower back as he worked his way in the stooped position down a row of iceberg lettuce. In his mid-20s at the time, he filed for and received workers' compensation insurance. The insurance company approved the surgery proposed by his doctor to repair 2 herniated discs.

The end result, as is common with many surgical procedures of the back, was that his pain worsened. Still, Juan returned to the field, and worked there for ten years between 1993 and 2003, following 3 years of disability leave and unemployment from 1990-1993. Working through the pain, in 2003, he re-injured himself to the point where he could no longer bear to work: he could hardly walk. Nearly ten additional years of court battles led to the conclusion that Juan's employer at the giant lettuce firm was not responsible for covering his current condition because it was due to an injury sustained at his former job with the then smaller firm. Furthermore, the merging of the smaller

company into the larger voided any legal obligations to attend to long-standing workers' medical conditions, even if originally induced by work. Another problem is that the original insurance company no longer existed and long before experiencing re-injury, Juan and his doctors signed paperwork that officially closed his case. It was now impossible for him to receive followup or continuance care and coverage.

In the meantime, as a legal resident, Juan had been accessing some funds and health care coverage from monthly Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and from Medicaid; however, the one treatment that brought him relief, physical therapy in the pool at the YMCA, started to get cost prohibitive. Medicaid and SSDI would no longer cover these expenses as Juan had reached the refundable limit. Paying out of pocket created financial strain for his family, which included his wife, Lizette, and three young daughters. The only expense the original workers' compensation insurer continued to cover were his prescription medicines. Juan did not like to take these pills because they made him feel dizzy and dysfunctional, limiting his ability to take care of his three growing daughters. Juan explained to the legal clinic staffer and myself the effects of the different treatments on his pain levels and sense of overall wellbeing:

La terapia me relaja y me da animas a seguir con mi vida...las drogas me afecta a mi mente, es como mi mente está durmiendo pero mi cuerpo funciona. La terapia no me cura, pero me da fuerza. No entiendo por qué la seguridad no cubra algunas cosas. ¿Por qué la autorización de mi doctor tiene valor en estos casos, y en otros no?

Physical therapy relaxes me and encourages me to go on with my life...the drugs affect my mind, it's like my mind is asleep but my body is functioning. Physical therapy doesn't cure me, but it gives me strength. I don't understand why the insurance doesn't cover some things. Why does my doctor's authorization have legitimacy in some cases, and not in others?

Juan clearly expressed his knowledge that the physical therapy would not cure him. However, he also acknowledged that the exercises enabled him to function week

to week and gave him hope. They made him feel stronger and relieved his depression brought on by feelings of helplessness and inadequacy due to his inability to work. Before the insurance company would approve more physical therapy, they required Juan to have another surgery. An MRI from 2008 showed a several herniated discs, and the doctors recommended a repair surgery to undo the damage done the first time around. This did not make any sense to Juan, who felt that he should do as much rehabilitative work during physical therapy to be as strong as possible before going into a second surgery to speed his post-op recovery time. And Juan also knew that this second proposed surgery could very well leave him in far worse shape: permanently disabled by pain and physical trauma, or worse, paralyzed. This is a dilemma faced by many disabled farmworkers who must chose between a life with chronic yet knowable pain and the uncertainties of back surgery.

Tidily organized in a discarded children's school binder, Juan kept notes from his neurologist, receipts from physical therapy and prescriptions, as well as documentation dating back to the original incident in 1990 and printed on letterhead from a company that no longer exists. He was not optimistic as he walked into the Watsonville Law Center for a free consultation. He had a feeling that the advice he would get would be that there was nothing anyone could do for him, legally. Nevertheless, getting closure regarding his case enabled him to strategize his health decisions based on the financial limits of his family. Social security disability payments helped ease some of the financial and medical burdens, but when based off of a farmworker's salary, they were not nearly enough to sustain a family. Juan limped into the Workers' Compensation Clinic because he wanted to know if and how he could get additional insurance coverage that would

pay for his physical therapy. Of the \$800 a month he received from SSDI, he received \$200 a month to pay for physical therapy. That price included a low-income family membership discount from the YMCA.

I listened to Juan's story while shadowing staff and volunteers at the Watsonville Law Center. As we got up to take Juan's information to the consulting lawyer, who waited in a separate room, Juan got out of his seat and shook our hands to show respect, but also to provide relief. Slowly, he anchored his arm to the chair to support his weight. His voice trembled with pain as he explained that he would be more comfortable standing and waiting in the office since his foot had gone numb and the pain shot up his spine. The lawyer's response was as he expected: "Good luck," she said, getting the employer's insurance to pay up.

When Juan won the case to receive Social Security Disability coverage, he essentially relieved the company of any financial responsibility. No lawyer would take on his case because they only get paid when permanent disability payments are awarded to the plaintiff. Even though on the original 1993 paperwork stated, "There may be need for future medical treatment", the lawyer felt that Juan was lucky that they at least have continued to pay for his prescriptions.

Another piece of paper indicated that a colleague of the Watsonville Law Center lawyer advising Juan at one point attempted to classify his condition as a new injury, but the court did not approve. The best option he had was to try and get sustained coverage through Medicaid for his physical therapy. Alternatively, he could cut a close out deal with the insurance company, which would have left him with a lump sum of around

\$50,000, but this would probably not have taken care of Juan's needs for very long. It would not even cover his up-coming surgery.

The Watsonville Law Center staffer returned to the office to give Juan the bad news, explaining how unfair the system is, but that legally he had no case. He did not seem too disappointed, as this is the response he had been anticipating. He just needed a final answer. "I had these doubts, for many years, is it right, or was there something else I could do. The company never asks us workers how much to take out of the check for insurance [implying that maybe he would have voluntarily contributed more to his SSI/SSID fund had he known what was to come]...I just wanted to know." We shook hands with Juan, exchanging sympathetic looks. On our way back to the conference room where the lawyer continued talking up a storm about the insanity and injustice of so many of her cases, we reflected on just how sad and unfair the legal and insurance systems are for injured workers. Suffice it to say, the Watsonville Law Center receives many cases like Juan's every month and helps educate farmworkers about their workers' compensation, health care, and legal rights.

Conclusion: The Living Dead and Voices from the Grave

Agricultural work is one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States (and worldwide). Leigh, McCurdy, & Schenker (2001), in their analysis of the hidden costs of un-compensated work-related injuries, estimate that:

On a per person basis, farming contributes to roughly 30% more than the national average to occupational injury costs The high cost is in sharp contrast to the limited public attention and economic resources devoted to prevention and amelioration of farm injuries. Agricultural occupational injuries are an under-appreciated contributor to the overall national burden of health and medical costs (235)

Furthermore, the impacts of injury extend beyond the individual bodies of injured workers as care takers and communities spend billions of dollars in attending to injured agricultural workers (ibid:235, 239-40). These contributions to the care and treatment of the work-injured, -disabled, and -sickened people in agricultural communities, as well as in communities based around other industrial and economic activities, act as social subsidies to governments and corporations that are no longer taking responsibility for worker occupational or general health care.

While living in an agricultural town like Watsonville for over two years, it became clearer to me how severely undercounted the work-injured, -ill, -killed, and -dead farmworkers are. Visiting the centrally-located Watsonville City Plaza – a green town square with a gazebo and park benches, trees, grass, and fountains – one can see dozens of disabled male farmworkers who were forced into early retirement in their 40s and 50s after years of farm work. They now shuffle down the streets with their walkers or roll in wheelchairs to spend the end of their days taking in sunshine, chatting vicariously about days gone by, troublesome aches and pains and doctors appointments, or sitting in communal silence, watching other more youthful and less physically inhibited people walk, run, or bike by.

One day, while sitting in the Plaza to collect my own thoughts, I observed these ex-farmworkers sharing information about their prescription pain killers and exchanging pills with one another. This practice, while sometimes dangerous and very much illegal, filled in the gaps in care left by dead-end workers' compensation cases, as well as by the overwhelmed state and non-profit clinic systems. One long-time farmworker in his 50s, Tomas, told me that he often reads the obituaries, both in Watsonville and while

visiting his rural pueblo in West Central Mexico. Many of these rural Mexican towns and cities have been sending communities for U.S. agricultural labor migration for decades. He observed that those obituaries listed in the migrant communities in the United States rarely featured individuals who lived past age 70. He attributed this to an array of chronic conditions – from diabetes to cancer – associated with impoverishment, lack of access to health care, overwork, dangerous working conditions, and overall poor quality of life.

Recently, Tomas decided to leave his work as a conventional fertilizer applicator to take up organic farming so that his two children might fare better later in life and have a good business to inherit. The original dream of having a viable farm in Mexico dwindled year after year as the economic and social ravages of NAFTA continued to decimate rural Mexico.

A visit to one of Watsonville's public cemeteries on East Lake Rd. is also telling. To an informed outsider, it is evident that most of the deceased laid to rest there are Mexicans. The colorful and elaborate year-round flower arrangements are reminiscent of the graveyards in Mexico. On *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), the cemetery is full of families, bringing bunches of *cempasuchil* (marigolds), candles, family photographs, hot *atole* (a sweet corn-meal based warm beverage), and *pan de los muertos* (bread of the dead) as traditional offerings for their ancestors. Based on my survey of the gravestones, the average age at death for people with Latino surnames interred at the public cemetery is 64 years. Certainly, there are a number of different causes of death that could underlie this low average, but the dangers inherent to the agricultural jobs occupied by most of the Mexican farmworkers in town do little to extend

life. I also observed families doing yard sales, selling tamales in parking lots, and washing cars in order to raise funds to send dead loved ones back to Mexico for burial. Returning to these sending communities to interview surviving relatives or retired injured workers who have given up on the U.S. legal and health care systems may shed more light on the structural vulnerabilities that not only shorten life but drastically diminish the quality of life for injured and disabled farmworkers.

My ethnographic observations and engagements with injured and ill farmworkers begin to address the question: “Where are the bodies?” posed by medical anthropologist Starr Sered and physician Dr. Rushika Fernandopulle in their book, *Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity*, which is about health care coverage inequalities in the United States (2005:1). Workers’ experiences are not usually the point of departure for treatment regimens or policy making as they apply to occupational injuries and illnesses, but they need to be.

CHAPTER 4

STATES OF BEING OFF-THE-FARM: STATE AND NON-PROFIT CONTROL OVER FARMWORKER HOUSING, CHILDCARE, AND HEALTH

Once again, I made my way down highway 101 on a Sunday in late August in 2010 to attend the Agricultural Workers Day (*Día del Trabajador Agrícola*) hosted in Greenfield, CA. This annual event has been held for the past ten or twelve years. It represented a small gesture of appreciation for farmworkers in the area, celebrating their contributions to the agricultural economy. Sponsors included California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), local television and Spanish-language radio stations, labor contracting companies, agribusinesses, health clinics, city, county, and state government agencies and programs ranging from the CA Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to Women Infants and Children (WIC), and a swell of non-profits. Free admissions and activities for children, like sand art and spin painting, live boisterous *banda* music, a parade, traditional Mexican folk dances from many different regions, and an interactive health and social services fair that is tied in to an ever popular *rifa* (raffle) attracted many participants to the event.

In order to validate the much coveted raffle tickets, participants visited at least 10 booths and had their tickets stamped by participating service providers. Representatives from these organizations participated in this and similar events in order to boost awareness of their existence amongst farmworkers: a group they struggled to reach and serve effectively. Several men participated enthusiastically in the raffle, occasionally collecting pamphlets, refrigerator magnets, and other free gifts printed in English and Spanish, and branded with non-profit logos and important phone numbers like the 211 safety net hotline. I once called this number to get the phone number and address for

the Santa Cruz County 2nd Harvest Food Bank for a recently migrated farmworker family, and was at first directed to a food pantry in San Francisco, even though it is a county-level service. The film *American Winter* documents the struggles that English-speakers have had with this service amidst their desperation for help and assistance.

A lot of families with children, tagging along on foot, in strollers, or strapped to the backs of their moms, engaged in the raffle as well. Everyone would at least win some sort of leftover Census 2010 paraphernalia used to encourage Latino participation in the national survey: bandanas, tote bags, and baseball caps. Winners with more matches on their raffle cards won gift baskets filled with what appeared to be food bank food (e.g. canned goods, boxed mac and cheese) or large Costco-brand bins of powdered laundry detergent: an especially valuable prize for those who must haul their clothes to laundromats on a weekly basis. The big prizes included new bicycles and computers, much-coveted items amongst farmworkers who often relied on bikes instead of cars to get to work safely and with less risk of police harassment. Farmworker families who wished to improve their children's educational opportunities could put a lot of hope into a computer. Home access to the internet facilitated communication with loved ones in Mexico, or enabled children and adults to learn English and computation themselves on their own time.

At one table, the DPR handed out Spanish-language comic books about how to prevent exposure to pesticides, wallet sized cards with emergency contact information, and English and Spanish versions of thick official reports about their efforts to mitigate public pesticide exposure. Several other organizations used the graphic novel format to reach farmworkers: an audience that speaks at least 8 different languages ranging from

Spanish to Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec, and who are of mixed literacy levels. Topics ranged from HIV/AIDS prevention to child safety, sexual harassment at work, and healthy eating. Across the way, the CHAMACOS (Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children of Salinas) project, “a longitudinal birth cohort study examining chemicals and other factors in the environment and children’s health,” (CERCH 2012) handed out literature. These pamphlets had been developed based on over a decade of intense research in the Salinas Valley about the array of toxins present in farmworkers’ everyday lives. These ranged from Raid to chemical flame retardants in furniture and pesticide residues on clothes and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Representatives from the UFW and Catholic Social Services spoke to me about how farmworkers struggle to get to work every day because they are routinely pulled over by the cops. If they are undocumented and driving without a license and have committed a traffic violation, such as speeding or not having updated their vehicle registration, their cars are towed and impounded. They can only be retrieved after a very hefty fine is paid. A licensed driver must reclaim the vehicle.

Many of my *compañeros* did indeed experience this and did not receive much assistance or support with respect to navigating the system to get their cars back. I accompanied one family to traffic court where they were able to have their fines reduced due to their income restraints. Leonardo, Amanda’s partner (now husband), and his friends and family members in other cars drove to Arroyo Seco, a popular recreation spot, where they had hoped to spend one of their few days off relaxing and playing with their kids in the creek. His fines alone totaled over \$600, not including impound fees, which can be upwards of \$1000: well over a month’s wages.

One of the booths offering rental assistance assured me that their “don’t ask don’t tell” policy regarding immigration status ensures that people who needed assistance could get it. Many services in the region either explicitly or implicitly operated this way. Social workers placed the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants on food stamps or enrolled them in the state health insurance plans for low income families. Such skillful negotiations and navigations of the system conflict with the anti-immigration philosophies, practices, and state policies that treat undocumented immigrants as undeserving and fraudulent recipients of federal, state, county, and even un-affiliated humanitarian assistance.

With an abundance of good food and music, people relaxed under the shade of trees amidst the heat of the day (hovering around 90 degrees). Yet tensions also simmered in the air. In between musical performances, a DJ read a poem entitled “*El Campesino*” over loud romantic Mexican guitar music. Some people whistled and clapped half heartedly when one of the radio hostesses made a strong statement about the sheer worth of *los campesinos*: that they made everything in agriculture possible. I did not work up the nerve to ask some young men what they thought about this event. They sat on the curb near me and appeared unmoved along with everyone else. They watched me, quizzically, as I took notes; I worried that they thought I was a policewoman or *la migra* (ICE). I also happened to be one of the few white people who participated in the event that day, besides some of the staffers from social service and non-profit organizations.

Given what the folks at Catholic Social Services and the UFW told me about the role of law enforcement in the lives of farmworkers, the police presence felt unnervingly

high at the Agricultural Workers Day. A group of young cadets, teens who worked with the police at events to help park cars and direct traffic, patrolled the parking lots with their navy blue uniforms, flashlights, and badges. Two real cops harangued a young man and his father for trying to sneak beer into the event in their cooler. The police requested that the beers be dumped out; one officer forcefully kicked an open can over with his big, black, knee-high boots. He performed more than his occupational duty in the process, sending a clear message about his power and control over their lives in the exchange. Father and son nervously handed over their IDs; dad looked visibly distressed, rubbing his eyes and face and pacing with worry.

At another shaded table, people held out their fingers for diabetes stick tests. They got their readings almost instantly, courtesy of the *Clínica del Valle*: the principal not-for-profit health care provider serving the Salinas Valley. I followed suit, holding my finger out in the queue. My blood glucose that day was 90, deemed “normal” by the health outreach worker who wrote my reading on the back of a bilingual blue pamphlet featuring information about diabetes prevention and maintenance. Some people smiled when they had their similarly “normal” readings announced. Many of the farm working folks who surrounded me in the line, from the very young to the very old, had very high readings (over 140mg/dL of blood sugar with random testing). Clinic staffed urged these people to make appointments at the clinic for further evaluation and guidance. Others had readings so high that they needed to go to the emergency room as soon as possible.

In this chapter, I first will discuss some of the ways the state is failing farmworkers. I will then demonstrate how agribusiness participation in social and health

services and nonprofits that serve farmworkers further limits the politics of the possible with respect to long overdue structural changes for migrant laborers working for U.S.-based agribusinesses. Farmworker health and welfare is shaped both on-the-farm through agribusiness control of the structure, pace, and conditions of work, and off-the-farm via control over the funding and direction of both independent and corporately sponsored moral and social agendas that explicitly target farmworker health and welfare.

Off the Farm, Into the Community

Encompassed within the scenes, sounds, and other sensations and emotions of *El Día del Trabajador Agrícola*, are all the layers of vulnerability and disparity faced by farmworkers and the assorted interventions, programs, and organizations that attempt to alleviate, prevent, or in rarer cases end these injustices. Representatives from public and private organizations dealing with housing, education, banking, pesticide safety, labor protection and advocacy, legal assistance, women's issues, health care, law enforcement, immigration, food and nutrition, and child care and welfare set up their booths by the dozens. All attempted to reach farmworkers: those deemed unreachable but also in dire need of outreach and interventions.

Each year in the rural and farm working communities of the Central Coast, many such health and wellness fairs take place. In the wake of the overall retraction of state and federal funding for these very necessary social and health services, some agribusinesses have started diverting their excess capital towards community, educational, and non-profit programs. Excess wealth and staff from agribusinesses are

donated to a number of schools, non-profits, community advisory boards, environmental organizations like the Land Trust, and other projects and programs.

This trickle down of wealth is visible in the form of giant buildings or wings named after predominant grower-shipper families, brass name plates, wooden plaques, and stamped bricks that line the walls of new facilities. The Boys and Girls Club in Salinas received a lot of funding from local agribusinesses as each room on the main floor of the facility is named after a local grower-shipper family. The library at the California State University of Monterey Bay (CSUMB), where I worked as an adjunct instructor while writing this dissertation, was named after a major grower-shipper family from the Salinas Valley. Tanimura and Antle contributed millions of dollars to that project.

In addition to funds, time and business expertise is dedicated to organizational development, fundraising, program design, public relations, and operational structuring. The Watsonville YMCA, which I joined during my field work, featured a name-plate for Driscoll's Berry Associates and I often saw company representatives meeting with the administrative staff discussing fundraising opportunities and strategies to get more Latinos to the gym. Some agribusinesses have even started their own non-profits, health and wellness programs, and company clinics to serve their farmworker and packing house employees, which will be described in greater detail in Chapter 5. As noted in Chapter 3, company representatives often serve on government agency boards as consultants or advisors in the development of laws and policies that have the potential to effect profound changes for the industry as a whole; these range from pesticide, workers' compensation and safety, water rationing, land use, environmental

and immigration policies and regulations at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

These efforts are often praised by local governments, non-profit organizations, university researchers and applied practitioners. These relationships served as a means of meeting the many needs of impoverished, disenfranchised, and un- and underemployed people in the wake of state retraction of funding and personnel from social service, welfare, health, and education programs. Still, economic depression throughout California persisted for many of the farmworkers I met. Organizational and non-profit leaders lauded local agribusinesses for their involvement in the community and urged the necessity of multi-stakeholder approaches to more fully address the problems plaguing farmworkers and their families. Yet, the concept of stakeholder itself is problematic as it is modeled after the shareholder: an investor in a business who aims to maximize profits rather than collective wellbeing.

Historically, agribusinesses have used varying forms of dominance and coercion to control their workforces (Burawoy 1976). These range from the conditions of indentured servitude that predominated during the *Bracero* program and into the present era of the Guest Worker program, to outbidding union contracts by offering slightly higher wages and some benefits. López (2008) describes the processes by which growers and contractors used paternalism to maintain worker loyalty, offering sodas, end of the year parties, and company logo hats, sweatshirts and jackets as gestures of appreciation. These gifts also offered workers an invitation to return for the same wages and more or less predictable working conditions in future years. Said on-the-farm activities were paired with morally charged and professionally designed

philanthropic and corporate social responsibility programs that target farmworker families off-the-farm. Oftentimes, local stakeholders as well as university researchers got involved in the development, evaluation, and public praising of these projects.

Myths about Farmworkers: The Social Milieu

Throughout my field research, it surprised me how many people assumed that *all* farmworkers had equal access to certain benefits such as free housing, health care, and child care, in addition to food assistance programs like food stamps and WIC. A few who expressed this used to work in the fields in the 1960s and 70s. Their status as U.S. citizens with high school diplomas and a mastery of the English language, often allowed them to secure slightly higher paying and higher ranking positions on the farm and significantly better compensated jobs outside of agriculture. Their unacknowledged status undeniably shaped their own, at times short-lived, experiences as farmworkers.

I interviewed some former farmworkers in their 60s who mentioned the prevalence of health benefits available through their farm work jobs. They also remarked that the wages were slightly higher as compared to today's standards. When Bardacke (2011), worked with lettuce and celery harvesting crews in the 1970s, he and his highly skilled *compañeros* could earn upwards of \$20 an hour (in 1970s dollars) with full health benefits under a union contract. Some of these workers went on to buy homes in town or to start small businesses for other family members. Bardacke describes how the demise of the union in the early 1980s led to a sharp decrease in wages that persists into the present day, even as the cost of living skyrockets. This was also exacerbated by the passage of the 1986 IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act), which legalized millions of immigrants. Many newly documented farmworkers

moved into non-farm jobs, creating a labor shortage. Growers responded by recruiting undocumented workers via farm labor contractors, who went to Mexico to recruit workers and in many cases exploited their vulnerabilities by failing to pay them properly or using threats of deportation or abuse to discipline workers. Following the passage of NAFTA in 1994, more immigrants from Mexico, desperate for survival and income in the wake of the collapse of local agricultural and urban economies, continued to migrate into the U.S. This produced a tiered hierarchy of vulnerability organized around the citizenship status, ethnicity (Holmes 2011; Cartwright 2011), and I would add gender. Real wages for farmworkers have actually declined drastically since the 1970s as the cost of living continues to increase and minimum wage raises are few and far between. During my field work, very few farmworkers had health care coverage and even fewer were on the market to buy their own homes and businesses. Martina, a retired social worker, had worked in the strawberry fields as a teenager and young adult in the 1960s and 70s. She was part of a migrant circuit that moved from picking citrus in Texas in the winter time, to picking lettuce in Yuma, Arizona, making some stops in the Central Valley, and ending the cycle picking strawberries along California's Central Coast.

Eventually, Martina and her family settled permanently in Watsonville, where she graduated from high school. As a young adult, her vivaciousness and bilingual skills allowed her to get a higher paying job as a strawberry packing inspector. From there, she went on to start her family and earned an associates degree. This gave her the financial and social stability of a year-round career. She insisted that her days in the strawberry fields of Watsonville were "the best times of my life," and she urged me not

to take “pity” on the farmworkers. According to Martina, their jobs were fun, and they received enough help from the state to make their lives livable.

Others echoed Martina’s beliefs, although in much more hostile and overtly racist ways. Local whites participating in online news forums insisted, with much resentment, that undocumented workers had co-opted the system of state-based benefits like food stamps and Medicaid, by fraud and through the use of their U.S. born children to gain access to citizen-only resources. Anti-immigrant commentators repeatedly tossed about arguments focusing on undocumented immigrants and farmworkers as the undeserving recipients of federal and state aid, in the form of tax-payer funded social insurance and safety net programs. The draining of the public coffers by immigrants placed undue burdens on deserving citizens who struggled to survive amidst the current economic crisis. The Watsonville Patch, run by AOL, ran articles about events and collections in support of farmworker families and organized by grassroots groups. Inevitably, these feature stories elicited responses in the comment feeds such as “why don’t they spend time helping their own?” (“their own” insinuating legal citizens of the U.S.). In the words of one especially racist commenter:

Mexico is an awful place for unskilled laborers. They are treated like slaves. All of them are staying here. If they can't find a job - no problem - they just figure out a way to go on public assistance. Have the female get preggy [pregnant] and have the baby in an American hospital! BINGO! Lottery time. Free shelter, free food, free medical care, plus free spending money compliments of the US and CA taxpayers (Kahn 2013).

Yet, shelter, food, and health care are by no means easy to access, economically, socially, culturally, or politically, for farmworker families. Many farmworkers do pay income taxes and pay into social security and medicare even though they are legally prohibited from collecting these benefits (Lantigua 2011). Farmworker pay stubs that I

inspected featured these deduction lines. The stories of my *compañero/as* help illustrate why it is so difficult to survive. The anti-immigrant attitudes and actions that circulated freely both in Watsonville and throughout the U.S. helped maintain and justify these inequalities between citizens and migrants. So too do the structures of agricultural labor on and off the farm.

Housing

Elena, a single mother of four who has worked in the strawberry fields for 18 years, reflected on the beauty of the work *en el campo* (in the countryside). She juxtaposed this deep appreciation of nature, which she cultivated on her porch with potted flowers and herbs, and the wonder of watching things grow with her suffering: routine aches and pains and the tremendous and exhausting effort it took to feed and house her 4 children with her salary alone. They could not afford to heat their rented house, which they shared with 4 other single rent-paying male farmworkers. In 2013, Elena had to take out a high-interest loan to pay the rent over the winter time when there were very few jobs in the strawberry fields.

In January of 2013, one young man who had been living in an outbuilding behind a house died of carbon monoxide poisoning because he used a charcoal grill to keep warm when temperatures dropped below freezing (Squires 2013; Hannula 2013). The cost of living in the Central Coast region is one of the highest in the country. Zavella (2011) describes the co-existence of low-wage jobs and high-cost of living in Santa Cruz County as a symptom of the uneven processes of development and globalization. Higher-paid Silicon Valley workers seek “cheaper” and higher quality housing in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, driving housing prices up. Migrant workers come to Watsonville

for readily available fieldwork jobs but the low wages make finding affordable housing impossible. The gap between the very rich and very poor continues to widen. Even with a labor shortage in the 2012 growing season, none of my *compañeros* received a raise even though they worked harder and longer to get their employers' crops harvested and onto the market, and despite ongoing rises in the cost of living.

None of the farmworkers I met during my field work received free housing. The overwhelming majority of my *compañeros* live in multi-family (4+) shared homes, like the one that Elena and her kids and housemates all share, or in outbuildings: garages, old barns, hand-made cardboard, plywood, and aluminum siding shacks insulated with carpeting or newspapers (*casas de carton*), and metal sheds meant for storing tools. Rents ranged from \$400 to over \$1000 a month for a single bedroom and did not change significantly with the quality of the dwelling or the number of people renting single occupancy rooms or dwellings. In one shared home I visited, occupied by several indigenous Oaxacan families who came from different villages and spoke different languages, the home lacked a proper gas hook-up. The families had precariously and dangerously rigged a small propane tank (designed for a barbecue grill) inside to fuel the indoor cooking stove. At one point, the rig caught on fire and the families called the firefighters who put out the flames and uninstalled the stove, leaving the families safer but without a way to cook food.

Very little state or county funding goes into building new affordable homes or apartments, even though there have been opportunities. In the 1980s, the Watsonville City Council entertained a proposal to build new, low cost housing on the land that currently serves as the municipal airport. Even though the need for housing is, and was,

great, local elites contested the repurposing of the airport based on their cultural attachment to it as a landmark, and their unwillingness to contribute tax dollars to the development of new residences for those deemed undeserving (Bardacke 1994).

Many *compañeros* qualified for but very few could access subsidized, farmworker, and migrant housing through state, federal, and non-profit programs (which are typically all interconnected through grants and management). Subsidized, low income housing programs largely excluded access to undocumented workers unless their children qualified to apply under their own social security numbers. Many of these individuals who managed to secure this lower cost housing had been living and working in the U.S. for at least 20 years, usually substantially longer. All had worked extremely hard to learn how the housing application system worked. Each year they had to ensure that their paperwork reached its final destination on time so that their housing would be re-secured. And all had at least one documented family member who could legally apply for these programs (sometimes a young child). Farmworker families living in subsidized, low income – or as the administrators of said housing programs preferred “affordable” -- housing paid about \$300-800 per month to rent small but clean and decent semi-furnished apartments that are consolidated into “camps” or communities, often located far from Watsonville’s center.

Many of these rural housing complexes had been informal camps in the past, run by growers or landowners who provided little in the way of basic amenities. Retired farmworkers and advocates told me many stories about the community now known as Villa Valle Verde located on the outskirts of Watsonville proper. What is now a series of one-story apartments with private bathrooms, running water, heat, electricity, septic,

and shared green space used to be long wooden shacks with no toilet and only a hose for water. All around the camp are fields of raspberries, lettuce and strawberries. My *compañera* Berta, a past and current resident of Villa Valle Verde, once described it to me (in its former state) as a hole (*un ollo*). She showed me a few pictures from the 1970s of her and her husband Joel posing in the doorway of one of the shacks. A flap of tattered curtain representing an effort to have some privacy hung in the background.

Even in the era that Martina described as “the best time” of her life, other farmworkers lived in horrific circumstances with unsanitary and dangerous conditions. While things have improved dramatically in these reformed and renovated camps over the past 30 years, thanks in large part to the efforts of community organizers and advocates who lobbied the state to make such improvements or to build more affordable housing, camp life still has its problems and injustices. Many privileged residents of the Central Coast assume that growers are supposed to provide housing for farmworkers. Few camps are grower owned and operated, leaving most farmworkers on their own with respect to finding housing. An organization called Agri-Culture, the community outreach and education arm of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, started a fund to provide loans to affordable housing developers. They described this endeavor on their website as follows:

With families doubling and tripling up and a waiting list for subsidized housing, it is evident the need for decent low-cost housing is great in Santa Cruz County and the Pájaro Valley. Among those who need help are many of our local farm employees. To help meet that need, Agri-Culture established a housing fund that will continue in perpetuity. To date, Agri-Culture's housing fund is not enough to finance any one housing project, but it has proven significant for projects that need that little extra to get going. By financing site improvements, we give the developer the leverage needed to attain financing for the rest of the project. Agri-Culture's Housing Fund is strictly for loans, so the fund will keep giving back to the community.

Instead of paying farmworkers enough to survive, grower organizations donate or loan money to developers of low income housing camps that are designated for farmworkers. Wealthy land owners are also exempt from paying property taxes as a consequence of Proposition 13: passed in the 1970s. This further depletes county, state and federal social insurance funds which are only supplemented by meager contributions from private donors. Often, these private donors are the same people who accrue surplus wealth through their legal exemption from paying property taxes.¹¹

One of the organizations that managed several affordable housing communities in the greater Bay area, including Villa Valle Verde and three others in Watsonville, is the Johnson Jurvis Corporation. In the 1970s, a group of university scholars and advocates sought to change the way low-income housing worked for residents of the Central Coast. They wanted to provide not only housing, but on-site services that would enable folks to access the things they needed more readily so that they could put more of their energy into acquiring education and job training. They worked with the state and counties to build new residences and redevelop old, run down properties. In the case of almost all Johnson Jurvis properties in Watsonville, the new residences are located on what were once rural slums: barracks, cardboard shacks, and run-down trailers. Now, modest apartments, town-homes, and ranch-style homes have erased almost all traces of these past landscapes. Only the residents and their memories remained. Many of the original residents stayed on; impressively, no one was displaced by the redevelopment process. Sometimes, three generations lived in these communities.

11. The H2A agricultural guest worker program requires employers to provide adequate housing for their employees. However, the dwellings and facilities that are provided are often substandard and residents' movements and activities as well as their interaction with outsiders are tightly controlled (SPLC 2013). This is also confirmed by the research of Benson (2008a, 2008b) and Holmes (2007, 2013).

The Johnson Jurvis Corporation used to be called the Johnson Jurvis Housing *Coalition*. In the 1990s, “Coalition” became “Corporation” as did its model of operation and organization. Johnson Jurvis is technically a non-profit and regularly applied for grants and federal and state funding in order to run the housing communities they administer. Each community had its own property manager, who lived in her own house at each site. A few over-burdened program managers and coordinators were responsible for assessing community members’ needs and developing programs that met those needs in addition to providing tutoring and after-school programs for resident children.

There were very few people who volunteer to help tutor children or adults at Johnson Jurvis properties even though the demand and the desire for these services was high. Those that did, I found through direct experience, were extremely limited in what they could accomplish for a number of reasons. The requirements for becoming an official volunteer for many of these housing programs entailed a TB test, getting finger printed and background checked, and being formally supervised by a paid employee at all times while on the premises.

Outside organizations who sought to serve residents at low-income housing communities had to buy their own liability insurance. A group of students from a local college attempted to establish an after school tutoring and mentoring program for children at Villa Valle Verde, but were confronted with a number of obstacles. Many of the volunteer students were undocumented, and getting finger printed and background checked proved too risky even though they really wanted to work with farmworker families and children. Thus, the efforts of these students to establish a grassroots,

volunteer-run program for farmworker children residing at a managed low-income housing property were staunchly denied by program leadership on the problematic principles of liability. Organizational directors claimed that their policies helped protect residents from harm. Ultimately, the youth at the camp who had looked forward to extra after school help and attention from older peers were let down once again. Both children and adults developed an understandable skepticism of groups or individuals who come in offering “help” as they usually don’t stick around for very long. The administrators of Johnson Jurvis made it difficult if not impossible for outsiders to sustain relationships with residents. In the process, the organization's leaders caused more harm by neglecting the residents' long standing needs and requests and by denying them the autonomy afforded to most homeowners or even renters.

In 2010, I signed up to volunteer to teach a beginners adult English class at Villa Valle Verde, upon the residents’ request and to help build rapport with *compañeros* and potential research participants. My time at the camp had to coincide with the Program Supervisor’s schedule. The contract I signed as a volunteer expressly prohibited after-hours visits per the conditions of the liability insurance (or so I was told). Regardless, I did visit with residents after class upon invitation, shared food with them, hung out at the picnic table while retired and work-injured farmworkers passed time by playing cards, or reading Bible verses on Wednesdays when a church deacon paid his visit. I can be judged or criticized as an anthropologist for breaking an organizational policy while conducting field research. However, I felt it was even less ethical to reject residents’ invitations to get to know me better, to share tortillas and beans, and to disrupt norms of

social interaction if only to respect a bureaucratic restriction that the residents and I agreed did more harm to their health and welfare than good.

The overt control these housing complex administrations, both state and non-profit, exerted over their residents was both visible and invisible. A frustrated former staff member of one of these housing bureaucracies expressed to me her disgust over the presence of brand new leather sofas and office furniture at the administrative headquarters located far from the camps. When residents asked that broken appliances be replaced, the program managers routinely stated that the funds were not available. Grant monies that were supposed to be applied towards arts and education enrichment programs for children never actually got spent that way as all the promised dance classes and technology tutoring programs never fully materialized. Functional computers sat collecting dust in the corner of one of the community rooms. One program manager claimed that the residents didn't use them or outright abused them. How could the computers be abused if most residents didn't know how to use them?

At a different camp run by the state, young residents were prohibited from riding bicycles or skateboards. A chain-link fence surrounded the property, topped with barbed wire, mimicking the methods of enclosure used by the medium-security prison and dump that are located nearby: keeping residents in and encouraging and largely succeeding in keeping outsiders out.

I went back to Villa Valle Verde after a long absence to visit Joel and Berta. I noticed that their *nopal* cactus plant, from which I had been offered paddles to take home and cook with my eggs, was gone. Villa Valle Verde had been so named on account of the residents' desires to plant fruit trees, chiles, and flowers on the land and

in the little plots of soil in front of each dwelling. Program Administrators required the property manager to instruct Berta to cut down her beloved *nopales* because they were deemed aesthetically unappealing by higher-level property administrators. Given that Gerardo and Berta have been living on this piece of land for decades during the mud hole days and into the present, forcing them to cut down a plant that represents so much to Mexicans, a symbol of culture, nation, and survival, proved especially demoralizing.

Meanwhile, the Food Bank made regular truck stops at the community and other camps, churches, and neighborhoods with poor residents to deliver bags of produce, bread, dried beans and rice, and canned goods. Every Christmas, the Salvation Army (which, along with the Food Bank, must have their own liability insurance) visited Villa Valle Verde to hand out canned goods and toys for the children. The residents cooked a potluck meal featuring traditional dishes prepared with ingredients purchased by the Salvation Army volunteers. Residents organized a buffet in the property's community room, featuring traditional Christmas and comfort foods, regional delicacies, and treats. Children, happy to be off from school, played together in the courtyard and on the playground with their new toys and gear. But the conviviality stopped there. After Joel and Berta and all the other families went to the community room to get a plate of food, they returned to their apartments to eat alone.

Berta was especially despondent amidst all of the activity. While she appreciated the good food, at the bottom of her bag of canned goods she found a shoddily crafted, and somewhat dirty, hand knitted hat, which she tossed to the side with disdain for its crude construction, and ugly colors, as well as for what it represented: a life of seconds

and rejects. In tears, missing her family and the holiday celebrations of her hometown in Mexico, she explained that life at the camp sometimes feels like prison (*es como una cárcel*). Indeed, the similarities between prisons – with their tightly controlled access for visitors and outsiders, geographically remote locations, strict rules about prisoner activities and access to educational resources, regulated supervision, and barbed-wire fences – and camps became harder to ignore after spending time at Villa Valle Verde and garnering explicit and implicit insights from residents like Berta and Joel.

Childcare

Fewer farmworker *compañeros* still had access to “free” childcare. Most of the working families I met relied on either private licensed, or more often unlicensed *guarderías* (day care centers) or independent caretakers, usually run by retired or work injured farmworker women. A local action group came together to address the many problems faced by farm working women, especially indigenous women, who had come to rely on unlicensed childcare facilities and workers. Horror stories of malnourished infants and children who lost weight as a result of not being fed during the day, accidental poisonings and illnesses from consumption of unsecured cleaning products, and outright abuse, motivated the development of multilingual guidelines and information exchanges geared towards educating farm working mothers about their options. It was upon the mothers' shoulders that the burdens of finding childcare usually fell. Newly arrived families were now far removed from their traditional networks of care takers, exchange, and from their daily routines that allowed for a blend of child care and work. The new U.S. systems and survival strategies could be quite confusing and terrifying to navigate.

Patricia struggled with tensions between her roles as a farmworker and a mother since her three young children required a lot of care and attention. Because her ex-husband contributed (some) financially to his daughters, Patricia could not access the low or no-cost child care benefits offered by the county and waited years for her name to rise up on the waiting list for a home in a state-subsidized labor camp. She lamented that other women who had more help and support from both within and outside of their families seemed to qualify more readily than she did. So, she paid \$15 a day per child for childcare from an unlicensed day care provider; her income fluctuated with rises, peaks, and declines in harvestable fruit in the raspberry fields. After school programs eventually accommodated her daughters as they grew older. Later on, her *suegra* (mother-in-law) provided free housing and childcare in addition to caring for her own younger children and other grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Other farm working women yearned to attend local community colleges to obtain childcare certificates and licenses. Wait lists for existing programs continued to grow and the demand for trained child caretakers' services never ceased. The receipt of two-year degrees, certificates in early childhood development, and licenses legalizing their practice served as a means of getting out of farm work entirely and also enabled women to tend to their own families more carefully. Financial, language, and literacy barriers often stood in the way of these goals for many farmworker women.

Of course, these aspirations are shaped by social expectations, predominant in the U.S. and Mexico, that women do the work of caring: for children, the injured, the sick, and the elderly (Glenn 2010). A very uneven and precarious political economy of care work emerges. Head Start employees could earn an equivalent or higher salary

than public school teachers (Bernell 2004), while unlicensed care workers charged by the piece rate (usually around \$15 per child) and had to take in more children than they could safely handle in order to make ends meet. On the other side, women who worked in the fields spent the majority of their salaries on child care alone, especially if they had more than one young child.

Since unlicensed child caretakers operated in the underground economy, they put themselves (and the children they cared for) at risk. Workers' compensation insurance did not apply to them, for one thing, and care work could be very taxing on bodies that have already been compromised by years of farm work. I conducted an interview with an unlicensed child caretaker in a small converted garage where she, her husband, and her 4 year old daughter lived. She took in 4 additional children, mostly belonging to former coworkers, in order to supplement the family income after she injured her back in the strawberry fields. Twenty-seven year-old Monica walked with a cane as she prepared lunch and snacks for the children under her care, who spent most of the day watching movies. Informal caretakers – older siblings, grandparents, in-laws, aunts, and friends – may be compensated less formally or not at all for their contribution to the collective welfare of their families and communities. Extended families sometimes traded off childcare duties, coordinating their days off to ensure that the youngest children would have someone to watch over them during the day.

In Watsonville, signs advertising licensed child care businesses run out of private family homes, many run by former farm workers, are visible on any given street. At least 75 of these are registered and monitored by the County Office of Education and by The Central California Migrant Head Start staff (Santa Cruz County Office of Education

2013). In the Pájaro Valley, a number of the Head Start sites developed innovative programming for children – including supplementary instruction in Mixteco in areas where the indigenous group predominated – as well as high quality child care and bilingual English and Spanish language development, socialization, and other pre-school activities (Bacon 2010). However, only three of the women I met had their kids enrolled in Head Start. A family with two farm working parents might be less likely to qualify, even with salaries as low as they are for agricultural laborers. And if one did not meet the state definition of “migrant” (traveling at least 60 miles away from the Pájaro Valley for work at least every two years), then one would automatically be disqualified from these services.

One employee at the Migrant Education office in Watsonville remarked to me that as more and more families settled permanently in the region, choosing not to migrate so that their children could stay in school, more and more lost their migrant benefits. Such benefits included free or low cost health and dental care for children, access to tutoring services and after school care, classes and workshops for parents, and a sense of belonging to a tight-knit advocacy community. The state categorization of “migrant” served not only to designate resources and services to a specific group of workers, but also to deny those benefits to children and parents who still needed them even though they no longer migrated regularly for work. Annual cycles of moving took a great toll on the children of migrant farmworkers in terms of their learning and health care continuity; however, these challenges are not necessarily unique to migrant (mobile) families. The historical legacy of discouraging settlement by immigrant farmworkers continues to affect farmworker families into the present through systematic disenfranchisement usually masked by claims of budgetary deficits and cuts.

Some agribusinesses have started funding day care and Head Start programs. The largest and most celebrated that I came across during my field work was Tanimura & Antle's top-of-the line day care center, which provided services to their employees' children as well as other local qualifying kids. The company, a transnational grower and shipper of fresh vegetables, provided the land and money for a large facility located near their corporate headquarters in Spreckels, California (Lyons 2003). The Monterey County Office of Education provided the staff and supervision of the facility. Interestingly, the program was developed on the basis of solicited employee feedback. As of 2005, 175 pre-school aged children had attended the Tanimura & Antle Child-Care Center (Tanimura & Antle 2005). Suffice to say, not all agribusinesses take the initiative to ask their employees how they would like excess capital to be spent on their behalf or otherwise.

Health Care and Social Services

Throughout her pregnancy, Amanda, whom we met in Chapter 3, experienced a number of complications and scares, ranging from gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, unbearable nausea and vomiting for all three trimesters, and an ultra sound that revealed possible problems for her yet-to-be-born daughter, Nina. The care Amanda received from her obstetrician was unlike anything she had ever experienced before in her years in the U.S. as an undocumented mother. She had long lived with a number of under-treated and untreated non-pregnancy related health problems of her own. Her third and fourth pregnancies took place in California, which provides pre-natal healthcare coverage for uninsured mothers (including undocumented women) under a special Emergency MediCal program.

Amanda named her fourth and final child after her obstetrician: an expression of gratitude and sign of the quality of care one could occasionally receive from providers in tune with the realities of their farmworker patients. But bringing Nina into the world would be the first of many more challenges to come for both mother and daughter. After Nina's birth, Amanda had her tubes tied. Her doctors advised that since this last pregnancy experience had been so dangerous, that future pregnancies would likely be just as difficult, if not worse. Medi-Cal covered this procedure. 60 days following Nina's birth, Amanda's pre- and post-natal coverage under the Emergency MediCal program terminated, as per the program regulations.

Upon birth, Nina's numerous health care needs fell under the auspices of two California state social insurance and safety net programs: Healthy Families, which insured and managed the health care needs of low-income children, and California Children's Services (CCS), which provided additional coverage and medical care management (via case workers) through the age of 21 for "...certain physical limitations and/or chronic medical, dental, or vision conditions" (California Department of Health Care Services 2012). As Nina grew and developed, her special needs and multiple diagnoses expanded in breadth and number, ranging from learning disabilities and an autism spectrum disorder, a painful growth defect in her hip that severely limited her ability to move and play, seemingly uncontrollable weight gain, and breathing difficulties related to asthma and sleep apnea. This latter condition she may have inherited from Amanda, who has struggled with sleeping, breathing, and throat problems her entire life.

With each condition came new doctors and service providers: physical therapists, child psychologists, social workers, surgeons, orthopedists, pediatricians, ear nose and

throat specialists, sleep researchers, and aides and teachers at an area school that specialized in working with children with special needs. In some ways, the state system of care worked for Nina. During my first interview with Amanda, we spent most of our time talking about health problems (hers and Nina's), work problems, paperwork problems, immigration problems, and boyfriend problems, none of which are mutually exclusive. At 3 years old, Nina cried a lot and had difficulty expressing herself and her needs without getting overwhelmed and frustrated. Amanda attributed this to Nina's "specialness" (*una niña especial*). She required Amanda's help to use the bathroom even though she had been potty trained. A box of toys, crayons, and other kid friendly items accompanied me to all household visits during field work and served as distractions for children so that I could focus on talking with their parent(s). I would bring play dough for Nina. My interview transcripts from 2010-2011 are routinely interrupted with Nina's cries and tantrums: of pain and frustration, and for attention.

In 2012, I attended Nina's fifth birthday party and the difference in her demeanor was remarkable. She socialized politely with adults and other kids, and greeted me in Spanish without prompt: with a gentle yet remarkably grown-up hand shake and a *gracias* (thank you) for coming. Some of these changes could be attributed to normal maturing typical of the first five years of life. However, even Amanda reflected on the remarkable positive changes in her daughter. Nina's work with a child psychologist and teachers really helped her adapt and cope with her many physical, social, emotional, mental, and learning challenges. Physical therapy, including plenty of water exercises, helped mitigate Nina's pain and strengthened her body in preparation for possible surgery and orthopedic shoe fittings.

Still, her limited mobility makes it hard for her to follow the pediatrician's recommendations to exercise to help keep her weight down: yet another health disparity she faces in a community that is quite vigilant about overweight, brown skinned youth as a marker of overall community ill-health. At one point, a social worker inspected Amanda's refrigerator and pantry for signs of junk food. She threatened to take Nina away from Amanda if her daughter continued to gain weight. These procedures, exams, and evaluations started when Nina was an infant and are ongoing. As the social worker's comments indicate, these encounters also entail evaluation of Amanda as a competent caretaker and mother. They all seem to underestimate all that Amanda must do in order to ensure Nina's wellbeing.

In order to get treatment for Nina's hip condition, which is being cared for by doctors at UCSF, Amanda must travel great distances, both geographically and socially. She relies on a web of public transportation to get to San Francisco, and from there she must navigate through an unfamiliar city with young Nina in tow. She often asked me for rides or for help in figuring out a public transportation route. Even getting Nina to local appointments on the public bus lines that serve Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties proved overwhelming at times.

Nina's sleep problems were diagnosed by a team of specialists and researchers who happen to have a research laboratory in Watsonville. The pediatricians at the county clinic where Amanda took Nina for routine visits and check-ups recommended the sleep clinic as they had been unable to come up with an accurate diagnosis or helpful treatment. There, researchers concluded that Nina would require surgery to have her tonsils and adenoids removed in order to open up her airways.

California Children's Services (CCS) – a special state insurance fund used to cover medical expenses for children with serious health conditions or disabilities – assigned Nina and Amanda a case worker. She informed Amanda that the recommended surgical treatment for Nina's breathing and sleep problems, would not be covered by her insurance. A variety of diseases, illnesses and conditions are listed on the CCS website, as well as explanations of what is and is not covered by the program. There are a lot of exceptions and conditions that further limit treatment options for low income children.

Together, and with the advice of other farmworker advocates, Amanda and I wrote to the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University. Using my laptop, we filled out an application. The paperwork featured an array of charts and tables where applicants diligently recorded their sources of income and monthly expenses. While the application was available in Spanish, it proved challenging to complete as the vocabulary was very technical and most of the farmworkers I got to know during fieldwork had not studied past the sixth grade in Mexico. In addition, formal proof of income, including six months' worth of pay stubs and last year's tax return statements, were required. Amanda's employer provided these documents, although with some reluctance for fear of outing himself as an employer of undocumented workers. To my surprise, the hospital accepted Amanda's application requesting free or low cost treatment for Nina. Doctors scheduled a pro bono surgery that would hopefully help Nina breath and sleep easier. All Amanda and Nina had to do was show up. Getting to the hospital would pose still more challenges.

Mother and daughter jumped through still more hoops in order to secure transportation to the hospital via the Care-A-Van program. With the recommendation of a child's social worker, families can get free transportation to and from the hospital if they do not have their own vehicle. In addition to this recommendation, another requirement entailed that Amanda receive a certificate from the local police department indicating that she knew how to properly install and operate Nina's car seat. Amanda did not want to go to the police station alone. Many migrants I got to know experienced great anxiety induced by the mere presence of a police officer or patrol car.

Once we arrived at the Watsonville Police Station, Amanda learned that an appointment would be required and that the person in charge of issuing the child car seat safety certificates only did these inspections once a week. With only days to go until the scheduled surgery, Amanda was forced to re-schedule closer to the start of the busy spring farming season; a decision she knew would displease her boss.

Amanda's partner and Nina's dad, Leonardo, rarely helped with his daughter's special needs. He did contribute to his family's financial wellbeing by diligently going to work six days a week for 5 to 12 hours a day (depending on the time of year). Amanda explained to me that Leonardo did not see Nina as a special needs child. Amanda thinks that this is because in Oaxaca, such children are not seen or treated the same way as they are in the U.S. This is in part because there very few services to help kids like Nina, and others with more serious conditions, disabilities, and impairments, in rural indigenous communities. Families also lack the income necessary to seek out those resources in larger, urban centers.

Given all of the day-to-day challenges of raising a special needs child, working, and tending to her own physical and emotional health challenges, Amanda often waited until the last minute to make transportation and housing arrangements. She often felt overwhelmed with all of the other elements of her life. She was referred to the Ronald McDonald House in Palo Alto by Nina's Stanford-based case worker. Luckily, Amanda secured a no-cost room there for a few days while doctors monitored Nina's post-operative recovery. About a week later, mother and daughter returned home.

A few months after Nina's surgery, Amanda received a call from the hospital's financial office indicating that the proof of income she had provided was not adequate. If she could not produce the proper paperwork, she would be billed for the entire surgery: upwards of \$12,000, or slightly higher than an average year's salary for a farmworker (NAWS 2007, 2010; López 2008). Eventually, the paperwork and proof-of-income dilemmas were resolved but created a lot of stress for Amanda on top of Nina's unnerving post-op nose bleeds. These were treated at the Watsonville Community Hospital and covered by Nina's Healthy Families insurance.

For two years, I spent time with Amanda and Nina, at their home during interviews, and on rides to different appointments to access (or attempt to access) health care, legal, and housing aid. The health care, social service, and non-profit systems more routinely failed Amanda, who struggled with many of her own health and other problems (described in Chapter 3) in addition to helping Nina along and supporting three other children and several sick relatives back home in Puebla. The hostility from her boss, coupled with having been sexually assaulted as a teenager, and domestically abused by her first partner during her first migration to the U.S. in 2000-

2001, induced bouts of paralyzing depression and anxiety. Amanda described days when she could hardly move, if only to attend to Nina. She received reduced-cost care at the county clinic, where doctors put her on a number of different anti-depressants, muscle relaxants and pain killers to help with her occupationally induced chronic back pain and emotional distress. Farmworkers grew frustrated with the cycle of pills they received whenever they took the time to go to the clinic. None of these pills seemed to work for Amanda. More often than not, that was the only form of care she received at the clinic: a hand written prescription or two.

Around the time of Nina's surgery, Amanda faced eviction from the house that she and several co-workers and friends rented together to help keep costs down. The homeowner faced foreclosure, and had been renting her property illegally while collecting a state loan that required her to be the primary occupant. She gave Amanda and her other tenants less than enough time to find new housing elsewhere. Amanda sought to get an extension through a legal aid office; however, they refused to help her as she was undocumented. Recently, this organization providing legal aid and advice about housing situations had undergone a great deal of public scrutiny for using federal and state funding to help "illegal aliens."

Conclusion

I had an opportunity to connect with several organizational directors at my field site. The Central Coast hosts a plethora of non-profits, some the recipients of generous donations from the agricultural industry. These organizations provide essential support and health services, enabling everyday survival for farmworkers and their families on a case-by-case basis. Not everyone is eligible or qualifies for these low-or-no-cost

services; they are contingent on income, employment status, age, legal status, migrant status, children, and gender, among other things. These programs, while helpful and well-meaning, are not equipped or designed to address alternative or syndemic (layered) possibilities of causation for chronic health problems. Instead, emphasis is placed on individual interventions and behavioral changes. It is difficult to determine if these gaps are purposeful or a result of organizations being overwhelmed and underfunded. Usually, these industry-non-profit connections are celebrated as a way for different stakeholders to come together to solve problems; but I see a number of problems that are perpetuated by these relationships.

The many layered disparities that shape Amanda, Elena, Patricia, Berta, and other farmworkers' lives also shape their health in ways that are not easily reconciled by the current state and county-based and or non-profit assistance programs or the U.S. health care system. This chapter has outlined and discussed a number of forms of assistance and programs for low income people, ranging from housing to health care, some even specifically targeting farmworker families. Farmworkers' stories about their struggles from within state and non-profit assistance programs demonstrated that none of them are "easy" to access, contrary to popular misbeliefs about the facility with which undocumented immigrants and others deemed undeserving access tax-payer funded programs and resources. Certainly, none of the programs work to address the multiple, layered problems faced by farmworker families at their root, as they are embedded within the very structures and modes of organization that characterize the agricultural industry.

CHAPTER 5

THE COMPANY WAY: THE AGRI-BUSINESS OF CO-PRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I documented the failures of the state and non-profit organizations to effectively address farmworkers' needs. Many organizations serving farmworkers in the Pájaro Valley are facing drastic funding cuts. Since the late 1970s, and intensifying during Reagan's presidency in the 1980s, the state has reduced its financial, managerial, and political responsibility for a number of social insurance and safety net programs as well as public education and health care. Many of these programs – with roots in Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society reforms – are perpetually cut. These cuts are exacerbated by tax cuts to the wealthiest corporations and individuals in the U.S.

These cycles of crises are heightened in California, which has a long history of budgetary instability, preferential treatment of elites, corporations and their assets and wealth, and the resultant politically, socially, and economically entrenched maintenance of race, gender, and class inequalities. Budget cuts for social programs and protections and tax cuts for the rich are further justified by racist politics that actively scapegoat undocumented immigrants for the economic and social instability and insecurity experienced by many citizens. Passed by a two thirds majority in 1978, California Proposition 13 permanently capped the amount of property taxes that land, commercial, or home-owning residents had to pay. This severely curtailed funding for social, health, and educational services as well as state infrastructure. The middle and working classes and poor people, especially people of color, struggled the most as a consequence of Prop 13, while wealthy residents benefited substantially by pocketing

savings from the tax cut. Later on, California Proposition 187 sought to exclude the children of undocumented immigrants from accessing public education and other essential protections and resources. While Prop 187 passed the 1994 state election, the U.S. federal courts rescinded the law for being unconstitutional. As documented throughout this dissertation, farmworkers have been excluded from a variety of basic workplace protections on top of many other structural exclusions on and off the farm.

These processes, patterns, and ideologies of exclusion that foster hyper segregation and stringent labor hierarchies are part of agricultural exceptionalism. Lipsky describes how the logic of these models of austerity and exclusion, which either superficially address or outright neglect the problems of the poor at the state level, has been institutionalized throughout history:

In the 1960s and early 1970s the modal governmental response to social problems was to commission a corps of street-level bureaucrats to attend to them It is far easier and less disruptive to develop employment for street-level bureaucrats than to reduce income inequalities (2000 [1980]:7)

“Street level bureaucrats” are a class of workers responsible for determining eligibility for benefits and social insurances, distributing aid, and managing the cases of people who receive state assistance. These federal, state, county, and city employees have a lot of control over poor people's lives. Their evaluations and judgements are what stand between poor people and their day-to-day survival. The continued existence of services for the poor, despite fiscal assaults, demonstrates that few programs are designed and organized with the intention of reducing let alone eliminating poverty and both the conscious and unconscious racism that bolster macro- and micro-level inequalities. Instead, the mission statements of these agencies and organizations and their on-the-ground activities focus on temporary alleviation of people's long term problems and

struggles to survive. Those organizations with loftier goals of instigating upward mobility of the poor, for example, are also limited by a deficit of living wage jobs and seemingly endless salary increases for both corporate and large non-profit executives. This is all compounded by the costs of living along California's Central Coast, which never decrease.

In the Pájaro Valley, I observed that some agribusinesses are stepping in to fill some of these funding and personnel voids left by the state and federal retraction of funds and resources for a number of public and privately managed services. Many grower-shipper companies have developed corporate social responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy programs, which are guided by company-defined philosophies of community and benevolence. When I refer to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), I use Jenkin's (2005:525) definition: "...voluntary corporate interventions aimed at improving the social and environmental impacts of a company's business activities." He contrasts this to philanthropy "which arises after profits are made" (ibid). However, both serve multiple purposes for agribusinesses: ranging from tax cuts for charitable fiscal and product donations and investments, to good publicity and marketing opportunities that help foster customer as well as local residents' loyalty. Those corporate-sponsored programs that focus on health also explicitly seek to ensure that farmworkers' bodies stay in good shape for the physicality of their work, thereby reducing the costs of labor recruitment, lost productivity, health insurance (when applicable) and workers' compensation costs.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will describe and problematize four examples of agribusiness CSR and philanthropy: the donating of surplus produce to area food

banks; the granting of educational scholarships and funding for local public schools; the distribution of grants by an agribusiness philanthropy department to select programs serving farmworkers and their children; and the development of employee wellness programs as well as the return of company-sponsored but privately operated clinics. I argue that despite the surface level good intentions of such initiatives, agribusinesses “co-produce” the conditions of social, economic, environmental, and health inequality and disparity that affect farmworkers and their families while actively participating in the development of solutions to a number of problems in the communities where they are based.

I use the term “co-production”¹² to illustrate how people and industries in positions of economic, social, and political power propose shortsighted solutions to problems that are, in part, of their own making. Agricultural labor hierarchies and production practices create a lot of harm to farmworkers, yet rarely are these practices acknowledged in solutions developed, sponsored, and implemented by agribusinesses, either independently or through university or non-profit partnerships. In all of the examples I cite exploring farmworker-focused social or health interventions, community service projects, philanthropic donations, and research, I consider that “How we know health depends on how we talk about it, and how we talk about it shapes how we think about it” (Guthman 2011:14). When farmworker ill-health, food insecurity, or poor educational outcomes among farmworker children are understood as a result of individual behaviors – cultural, psychological, or otherwise – the contexts and structures that support agribusiness and ultimately shape the lives of farmworkers are ignored or

12. Jassanoff (2004) uses the concept of co-production differently to describe “assumptions about a scientific object's causes and character being built into models of examining it” (Guthman 2011:68).

disregarded outright. What is overlooked by private and state-sponsored efforts to improve the health of poor people of color shapes popular assumptions about those groups. These ideas impinge upon farmworkers' health outcomes as well as their efforts at achieving an improved quality of life.

With respect to CSR and philanthropy, I contemplate the following questions: How and for whom is CSR or philanthropy produced and performed? How do CSR and philanthropy shape and create new social relationships? In many respects, agribusiness-designed CSR and philanthropy programs maintain the status quo, enabling a corporation's success in the marketplace by ensuring a reliable source of cheap labor. Real changes or improvements for farmworker families are actively prohibited. Meanwhile, the designers and implementers of these programs framed their work and contributions to farmworkers as benevolent: as acts of caring. This also serves agribusinesses by maintaining a positive public image amidst increasing public skepticism of the health, environmental, and to a lesser extent social and labor consequences of California agriculture.

Social scientists have interrogated the roles of CSR in the developing world, noting the inherent conflicts of interest, the inability of CSR models to reduce poverty due to corporate dependence on cheap labor and raw materials throughout the global supply chain, and the lack of accountability for CSR project outcomes (Fig 2005; Jenkins 2005). Anthropologist Rajak (2010) studied CSR amongst South African mining companies that sought to deliver HIV/AIDS prevention interventions, medications, and wellness programs to their employees amidst rapidly rising infection rates. The rise in HIV/AIDS rates coincided with increases in un- and under-employment and state

neglect of citizens' health care and retraction of social insurance and benefits. Rajak urges us to understand the impacts that business-based arguments for CSR are having on society. Corporations legitimize and moralize their sponsored interventions in both the public (workplace) and private (household) spheres and emphasize individual responsibility and behavior change amongst employees. This leaves the institutional cultures of corporations that cause or perpetuate human harm, vulnerability, and suffering unquestioned.

Very similar processes are taking place in the Pájaro Valley, as some agribusinesses are engaging directly in farmworker health interventions both on and off the farm. As Rajak observed in the context of the privatized South African mines, "...old boundaries demarcating the company's zone of responsibility are re-inscribed [The result is an] awkward topography of authority and uneven service provision at the local level..." (2010:553-554). The spatial divisions between work and home are altered by agribusiness involvement in the lives of farmworkers in off-farm contexts.

Agribusinesses are supplying area non-profits and schools with funding and surplus personnel, who serve on boards of directors and trustees and community committees in advisory capacities. In some cases, agribusinesses start their own non-profits and philanthropic organizations, many of which target farmworkers. One strawberry company, Reiter Affiliated Companies, the principal berry grower for Driscoll's, started their own employee clinic to help address high rates of diabetes and obesity and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in two different production regions in California. Both diabetes and obesity and STIs are diseases that affect farmworker wellbeing, as both often entail syndemic effects of the interrelated burdens of multiple diseases and

social suffering (Singer and Claire 2003). However, companies also see these diseases as effecting workers' efficiency and productivity in the fields. According to Rajak: "[the] company consolidates its authority over a particular field of society, in this case, its workforce, conflating the exigencies of human care with the interests of capital" (ibid:551). This chapter will explore the reach of agribusinesses into some of the most intimate and critical realms of farmworker survival: their food, their education, the social welfare, and their health.

Biting the Hands that Feed?

Several agribusinesses donate surplus produce from their coolers or fields directly to the food banks or via an agribusiness-founded organization called SHARE (Sharing Agricultural Resources). Based on the Central Coast, SHARE and its affiliated grower-shipper partners coordinate donations from all over the Western U.S. Through the networks of the county-based food banks, truckloads of fresh fruits and vegetables are distributed to community pantries, schools, churches, and non-profit programs. The agribusinesses that donate can receive tax deductions and avoid fines for dumping their surpluses in the regional landfills. Otherwise, what goes unharvested is tilled back into the soil as green compost. One grower estimated that at least 20 percent of the food grown on a typical commercial farm went to waste, one way or another (SHARE website).

Lavish fundraisers help fund SHARE, usually organized by higher-ranking non-field staff members employed by area agribusinesses. Local newspapers routinely covered food bank distribution statistics, ranging in the millions of tons, with substantial increases year after year. Non-profit anti-hunger organizations hosted luncheons to

honor record-breaking or long-term donors and volunteer laborers, many with agribusiness affiliations.

Those who fight hunger, either as donors or donation coordinators, are careful to reassure the public that their work benefits the *working poor*, as well as a growing number of middle class people who are struggling with unemployment and the rising costs of living.

Astonishingly, people who [are] at risk of hunger on the Central Coast [are] not just homeless, but also, the working poor and middle class with day to day expenses that [mean] having to choose between paying rent or buying food (SHARE website).

The history of SHARE, ironically, makes no mention of farmworkers. When visiting farmworker households, I took note of what foods cooked on stovetops or sat in kitchen pantries and storage, as well the prepared meals or fresh fruits offered to me. I routinely observed men, women, and children carrying the tell-tale recycled mesh or plastic produce bags filled with 10 pounds of staples like potatoes, lettuce, cabbage, onions, carrots, apples and oranges, as well as beans and rice and canned goods. Sometimes, people also received eggs and bread donated by grocery stores. For farmworker families, food bank food stuffs helped fill voids in household income, especially in the lean winter months when there were no harvesting jobs. Seasonal fluctuations in agricultural employment shaped the busy cycles at the food banks and pantries. Food bank staff prepared for increased traffic at their distribution sites from November through March.

During the labor shortage of 2012, some farmworkers told me that they worked up the courage to ask their supervisors for a raise. Almost always, supervisors resisted or dismissed these requests. Even when farmworkers made a point of asking for basic

and legally required amenities, like clean drinking water, their supervisors told them that they could go find work elsewhere if they didn't like working for them. This coercion works to maintain workplace inequalities as well as to ensure a sufficient labor pool. This explicit message, that things will never improve, is also reiterated (even if unconsciously) in the messaging developed by SHARE:

Hunger is *never going away*, and it remains a huge problem in California SHARE will continue to grow, as the need to feed the hungry will *inevitably* continue to grow as well (SHARE website, emphasis added)

If hunger is defined as a problem of both insufficient quantities of food as well as lack of access to certain kinds of healthy foods (e.g. quality foods) – as emphasized by SHARE and other area hunger fighting non-profits – then agribusinesses can continue to promote their production and business practices (including philanthropic endeavors) as benevolent. This justifies as necessary and rational their typical methods of harvest management. For instance, many more tons of food are grown than can feasibly be harvested or marketed. Growers over sow their crops order to insure against climate, pest, or market instabilities. If one field becomes un-harvestable or marketable due to climate or pest damage or market flooding, that field can be tilled under and the grower can rely on crop protection insurance to make up for losses or just accept the loss and focus on other fields.

The current conventional harvest management models do not account for the losses of farm inputs during the food production cycle: water (from irrigation), pesticides and fertilizers, and fossil fuel emissions. How will these losses affect the future sustainability of California agriculture? The availability of clean drinkable water? The survival of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that make up the Central Coast? As Fig (2005) notes, environmental concerns are readily externalized by corporations due

to a lack of effective environmental monitoring and regulation. Externalized environmental damages are also masked via corporate green-washing (ibid).

Agribusiness participation in hunger fighting efforts does not easily reconcile with these production practices or with standard farm labor practices. These include the exclusion of many commercial and land-owning enterprises from paying significant taxes, the payment of low hourly or piece-rate wages, and the seasonal (impermanent) availability of work for farmworkers. Conditions of long-term food, housing, and health insecurity are produced along with farmworker family dependence on farm work jobs for their bare survival. Many of these workers have been displaced from their livelihoods in Mexico by the arrival of transnational agribusinesses as well as the flooding of the Mexican market with foreign food products, including genetically modified foods and seeds (López 2008).

One of the co-founders of SHARE, a prominent grower, Fred Gray, explained to me that there had to be sufficient buy-in into the idea to re-direct agricultural surplus into community food banks. Since lowered taxes, avoided dumping fees, and the moral projections entailed in fighting hunger greatly benefited agribusiness participants, it was an easy sell. Rajak notes, too, how the business logics of economic risk assessments, profit-loss models, and projections merge with philanthropic and CSR endeavors.

[The] confluence of [the] efficient business and [the] caring corporation...combines moral imperatives with, as Mauss put it, 'the cold reasoning of the business, banker, or capitalist' (1967 [1925]: 73). (2010:552)

Flow charts and bar graphs, printed in bright colors in annual reports and displayed on SHARE's website highlight the annual increases in donated and distributed produce, similar to those produced to track the yields and sales of fresh produce and market prices.

Interestingly, the most common reason for migrating to work in the fields posed by the farmworkers I interviewed was to allow folks to feed their families, both in the U.S. and in Mexico. Throughout my interview transcripts, one can hear the reprieve -- “*Tenemos que comer*” (we have to eat) – as a key reason for migrating and working in the fields in the U.S.. This emphasized to me what farmworkers perceived as one of their main vulnerabilities.

Area agribusinesses, while having accomplished the laudable goal of increasing the distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income and food insecure communities, distanced themselves from the root inequalities that perpetuate poverty and hunger amongst their own employees. The similarities to Rajak’s research findings are disturbing. Neither the mining company in South Africa nor the agribusinesses in the Pajaro and Salinas Valley’s acknowledge their roles in perpetuating worker vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, food insecurity or diabetes and obesity. As Rajak observed:

[The mining companies externalized their responsibility for HIV/AIDS]. They attributed the source of ‘infection’ to mineworkers themselves and social conditions *outside* the mines, or, as Didier Fassin puts it, to the ‘susceptibility’ of the ‘African body’ rather than the ‘working conditions that are wearing it away’ (2007: 139).

Over and over during my fieldwork, industry representatives, non-profit and state workers, and the general public, reiterated to me that farmworkers did not know how to eat or take care of their health and that elements of Mexican culture (e.g. the use of lard, the absence of vegetables in the traditional diet) as well as irresponsible individual behaviors (e.g. poor time management, the overconsumption of fast foods, placating children with candy and sweet beverages) were to blame for poor nutrition and the resultant health epidemics of obesity and diabetes in the community. As Minkoff-Zern (2012) noted in her fieldwork with indigenous farmworkers on the Central Coast,

farmworkers possessed a wealth of nutrition and health knowledge from their home pueblos but struggled to mobilize it amidst seasonal fluctuations in income and difficulty accessing familiar, healthy foods. The possibility that diabetes and obesity have multiple origins, from chemical exposure to stress are also strongly contested by agribusinesses and mainstream health and science narratives (Guthman 2011).

Meanwhile, the agribusiness industry cultivated a positive image for itself through the production of fresh produce and benevolence, both moral projects in and of themselves. Agribusiness involvement in broader-based anti-hunger projects allowed the industry as a whole (versus particular growers) to negate their role in producing food insecurity and hunger while simultaneously participating and profiting from the transnational processes that displace Mexican farmers from their lands and reproduce poverty in both the U.S. and Mexico. The informal California agribusiness mantra “We feed the world,” stands in stark contrast with that echoed by dozens of farmworkers: “We need to eat”.

Reaching for Stars and Strawberries:
Reproducing the Next Generation
of Farmworkers

Along the lines of public and higher education, many agribusinesses donated surplus capital to schools and to college-bound children of farmworkers in the form of scholarships. The California Women for Agriculture (CWA) clubs started in the 1970s to support the agricultural industry and their grower-shipper husbands. They worked to counteract the United Farmworkers Union grape boycotts and worker strikes, crossing grocery store picket lines and organizing counter-demonstrations in the fields. The UFW initiated these campaigns in order to draw attention to the severe inequalities and

hazards in the fields and to raise worker wages to a more livable level. The industry framed the UFW's demands as threats to grower livelihood, state economic stability, and job creation.

Today, CWA, which includes women growers, corporate agricultural executives and other professional-level staffers, hosts fancy fundraising dinners, tours, luncheons, donation drives, and dances. These are catered towards agribusiness and local economic and political elites and affiliated individuals and businesses (e.g., big bank branch managers, tractor stores, lawyers, doctors, industrial filling stations, and the like). Each year, they raise tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship money that is distributed to about 20 young women, some of whom want to study agriculture or agribusiness in school, and some of whom are the children of farmworkers (California Women for Agriculture Salinas Valley Chapter 2013).

In the 1950s, the Driscoll family led the way in establishing the California Strawberry Commission: a trade group that has focused on keeping market prices stable by establishing an agreement amongst all area berry growers to dispose of all surplus berries. Today, the CA Strawberry Commission also invests in strawberry growing research, and provides lobbying funds and services to protect the interests of the industry. A colleague of mine who works with farmworkers received glossy scholarship packet in her non-profit's official PO box. The materials promoted the CA Strawberry Commission scholarship program as a means of encouraging upward mobility for farmworker children. They presented the story of farmworker-turned-astronaut José Hernandez, whose parents immigrated as farmworkers from Michoacán, Mexico. His story helps the CA Strawberry Commission validate its role in supporting

educational opportunities for farmworker children. Interestingly, Hernandez' autobiography *Reaching for the Stars* is translated into Spanish as "The Star Harvester" (*El Cosechador de Estrellas*).

Driscoll's Strawberry Associates (DSA) provides some funding to the regional Migrant Education programs. Social workers from the Pájaro Valley Migrant Education program regularly visited farm fields contracted by Driscoll's, or their berry growing partner, Reiter Affiliated Companies. There, Migrant Education outreach and social workers recruited young farmworkers – predominantly indigenous Oaxacans between the ages of 12 and 21 – for their special night school program. I volunteered for the Young Farmworkers School program on Monday and Wednesday evenings for about a year, giving rides to the students, helping them learn English and basic computer skills, chaperoning field trips, and coordinating guest speakers and presentations.

By law, one must be at least 18 years of age to work in the commercial farm fields of California; during the summer, exceptions are made for teens in school looking to make some extra money. The young farmworkers I met included teenaged men migrating on their own as newly established family breadwinners for parents and siblings back home. Many others, young men and women, accompanied their parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, and occasionally grandparents to work in the fields each day. Almost all of these youth migrated from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, and spoke one of several indigenous languages and their numerous regional dialects. I heard Mixteco, Zapotec, Triqui, Chatino, and Purépecha (from Michoacán, a state with a longer-established migration pattern to Watsonville) spoken on a daily basis in Watsonville. According to Mines et al. (2010), there are 23 indigenous languages from

Mexico and Central America spoken throughout the state. Half of California's Mexican indigenous farmworkers reside in the Central Coast region (Moser 2013).

These youth expressed to me their desires to learn English so that they could navigate their new communities more effectively. Many wanted to learn how to use computers proficiently if only to skillfully Google-search images from their hometowns. They printed out these scenes or photos of festivals to pin up on the walls of their sheds or shared bedrooms. More often, I was asked for assistance in downloading an eclectic mix of music – ranging from Spanish Christian, Mexican *corridos*, hip hop, rap, and indigenous language *chilena* songs from home – which they could upload onto their Metro-PCS rented cell phones. When paired with earphones or the increasingly popular portable mini speakers that replaced the more antiquated 6 by 8 inch portable radios carried by older generations, these songs made the work days more bearable. One student asked me to help him translate a love poem into English to impress a sweetheart back home in Mexico.

Some Young Farmworker School students expressed to me their desires to continue their educations to pursue agriculturally based as well as non-agricultural careers and interests ranging from small business management, teaching, childcare, nursing and medicine, biology and botany, cooking, art and music. Others were less seriously invested in their night schooling, and told me about how they had saved up enough money to buy land and homes in Oaxaca. In a few years they hoped to go home, get married, and start families. Few have completed their goals; many are still in Watsonville working in the strawberry and raspberry fields. Many have started families in the U.S. No one felt like they could survive in the traditional U.S. public schools.

Students struggled with proficiency in English and Spanish. Some even felt like they did not speak their own indigenous languages fluently. The knowledge they acquired in the home setting – indigenous languages, how to use and identify an array of native medicinal and edible plants, horticulture and agriculture – conflicted with the more rigid and Spanish-language only structures of the public schools located far from the rural *ranchos* in more urban town centers in Oaxaca.

Marisol, an 18 year old Mixteca, migrated to Watsonville to accompany her parents and older siblings in the fields at the age of 13. She told me that many of the teachers in Oaxaca beat students for speaking in their native languages. Teachers in Pájaro Valley School District did not always know how to work with indigenous language students and sometimes placed them (erroneously) in special education classes. Even though Marisol expressed a desire to study art more formally in the U.S., and proved to be a dedicated and quick learner, she acknowledged the barriers that prevented her from continuing her education more intently in the U.S.. While driving to the public library where we sometimes spent time together, we passed by Watsonville High School during the lunch hour. Marisol commented to me how lucky all of those students were, and how their parents must have been rich to be able to send their children to school. Cultural, language, economic, and social barriers made adapting to a “normal” school overwhelmingly challenging for youth like Marisol. Patterns of migration have not only displaced people from their homelands and livelihoods; they are also disrupting many kinds of informal and formal education of the migrants themselves, as well as their children (Zavella 2011; López 2008; National Center for Farmworker Health 2002; HRW 2010; Romano 2011).

The Migrant Program did a lot to support and celebrate the Young Farmworker School students who did advance to Spanish-language GED classes and who enrolled at area community colleges. Sometimes, the school district or local agricultural firms hired them as indigenous language interpreters. Area health care providers and hospitals are also making efforts to mentor young students to become medical interpreters (Moser 2013). Migrant Education and Oaxacan community and political organizing groups in California placed a lot of importance on fostering generations of indigenous language professionals, particularly in the social service, legal, health, and education fields (Mines et al. 2010; Moser 2013; Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño 2012).

Most Young Farmworker students, however, came to night classes when they could, depending on work schedules and energy levels. They continued to work in the fields to support their collective family wellbeing. Job and family obligations, limited access to transportation, and substandard housing conditions with a lack of quiet and privacy constricted their opportunities to learn. Farmworker families rarely had official proof of their residence in the community (e.g. bills with a mailing address, official identification) and switched houses regularly, which mitigated their consistent access to the local public library.

On their employment applications, young workers – often with the support and guidance of parents or other friends or relatives who help them find work – changed their ages to “19”, “20” or “22”. Agricultural employers in California typically do not press these young applicants or their parents further on the issue of age. Instead, it is widely assumed that many workers who claimed to be in their early 20s simply looked younger.

Growers routinely mobilized racialized judgments concluding that Oaxacans, overall, are biologically shorter in stature. Shorter, younger, and smaller workers are valued for being closer to the ground where the fruits and vegetables await picking (Holmes 2007). This occupational embodiment, to be *agachado* (stooped) or *doblado* (bent over), is a key source of strawberry farmworker suffering. Shortness is conflated with (young) indigenous workers' ability to pick quickly and efficiently. A retired professor told me a story about a 5 foot tall doorway used by one grower to select strawberry workers. Those who did not have to stoop to pass through were offered jobs. A grower I met on a farm tour emphasized his efficiency model to a group of junior college students studying organic horticulture: "The shorter the people are, the higher the beds, the faster you can pick." Such ideas, while baseless and extremely racist, justify the continued institutionalization of race-based employment practices and heighten young worker vulnerability to work-related injuries, pesticide exposure, sexual and economic exploitation.

Similar logics have been used to racialize and gender other kinds of farm and non-farm labor (Zavella 2011; Benson 2008b; Holmes 2007, 2011, 2013; Ong 1987). However, these abilities, ascribed as natural, may be temporary as my *compañera* Yolanda discovered. She first arrived to the U.S. as a migrant farmworker at the age of 16, accompanying her dad on 6 month work stays in agricultural fields in California, Michigan and Indiana. At 27, her hands have already started to develop the early signs of carpal tunnel syndrome: numbness, pain, and stiffness from her finger tips up through her shoulders. Women Yolanda's age and older start wearing wrist braces as a means of self-care to keep medical costs down and to keep their jobs. Preference for Latino

(and more specifically Mexican) farm labor has over a one hundred year history in California and the Southwestern U.S., and is based on logics that emphasize the ethnic work ethics and controllability and disposability of migrant work forces recruited or enticed from south of the U.S. Mexico border.

Those few Young Farmworker students and their peers who attend school full-time, who make it to their high school graduations or earn their GEDs, become model minorities for the community. Their stories, like those of astronaut José Hernandez, or Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor (for an urban, and female counterpart), are used to reproduce the notion that hard work automatically leads to success. Yet, “success” is narrowly defined for the children of farmworkers and other poor people: namely, as improved prospects for jobs. Efforts in Watsonville by local political officials, educational leaders, and non-profit organizations focus on increasing job opportunities locally – including many in the low-wage service sector – and in attracting funding for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs in mimicry of the Silicon Valley’s development scheme (Bardacke 1994; Zavella 2011).

At the same time, funds for basic educational and youth services have been greatly reduced. Teachers and the local union routinely campaign to prevent further cuts. Regardless, each year, salaries and classroom budgets shrink, class sizes increase (sometimes to illegal levels), and more and more pink slips get issued.

These carefully scripted rhetorics of success and upward mobility for farmworker children and the practices they entail also work to maintain labor hierarchies by limiting opportunity structures. One student, Jorge, who saw me taking field notes in the Watsonville Plaza one day, told me about his ambitions to fly the Driscoll’s company jet

and to do aerial environmental photography for them. They are one of the largest employers in town. His parents had worked for decades as farmworkers, filling Driscoll's branded boxes with fresh strawberries. The very hierarchical labor structures that kept his parents in poverty and the growth of low-wages jobs in the region constrained Jorge's options and visions for his future. His goals of flying a corporate jet entailed both literal and figurative upward mobility. Meanwhile, the high school dropout rate for the Pájaro Valley Unified School District has risen over the last several years. Teacher friends indicated to me that while the school district did not keep official track of dropout rates, they estimated that between 30 to 50 percent of their students didn't make it to graduation.¹³

Meanwhile, Driscoll's receives routine press coverage at the beginning of the school year when volunteers from their corporate offices hand out school supplies at public elementary and middle schools attended by their farmworker employees' children. According to a Driscoll's employee quoted in an article in the Register Pájaronian, the Pájaro Valley's newspaper:

[These] schools, were chosen based on their high number of students that are from farm-working families... "Without families that manage crops, we would have nothing," Botelho said. "This is a way to reach out to them and say 'we support you.'" (Chalhoub 2012)

The students receiving the gifted school supplies attended schools with higher rates of poverty and reputations amongst teachers for hosting students who struggle immensely with their studies. Calabasas School in particular, located beyond Watsonville's city

13. Teachers made these estimates based on the fact that the income freshman classes at the local high schools were at times double the size of the graduating senior classes. The school administration in cooperation with the press routinely downplayed this problem, presenting less drastic statistics and reassuring the public that they were addressing the problem by adopting new classroom models which focused on improving test scores. The press sites the Southern Santa Cruz County (where most farmworker families live) dropout rate as 15 percent, compared to North County's 2-3 percent dropout rate (McCord and Jones 2011; Guild 2010).

limits and surrounded by agricultural fields, is attended by children from the Buena Vista Migrant Camp. Some Buena Vista children got bussed to higher performing (and whiter) schools in the northern part of the school district. In order to qualify to live at Buena Vista, residents moved at least 60 miles away from Watsonville at the end of the harvesting season (usually, mid-November). Many chose to go back to Mexico in order to reduce their expenses while they were unemployed for six months out of the year (November through May): neither their employers nor the migrant housing complex where they lived were obligated to them during the off season. Their children started and ended the school year in the U.S., and enrolled in other schools in Mexico or elsewhere in California, for the middle part of the academic year. Special correspondence programs facilitated bi-nationally by Migrant Education helped some students to stay on track.

Regardless of these efforts, the routine of being perpetually uprooted took its toll on children's educational outcomes. A local politician explained that this long-instated system of forced migration enabled agribusinesses to continue reproducing new generations of farmworkers and to inhibit the permanent settlement of farmworker families in the area. This latter objective is failing due to parents' determination to keep their children in school year-round and due to the heightened risks and costs entailed in crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. The failure to change the laws for the sake of migrant children indicates a continued commitment to controlling the lives of migrant workers and maintaining an exploitable workforce.

The retraction of state support for educational and children's programs – especially for English as a Second Language (ESL), undocumented students, and the

children of farmworkers – combined with the maintenance of oppressive labor practices, labor laws and conditionalities for the receipt of services like migrant housing, play a huge role in shaping farmworker children’s and parents’ educational and life struggles. Agribusinesses are also quick to intervene in school affairs when teachers, parents, or students express their concerns about the impacts that standard agricultural production practices have on their health, wellbeing, and learning. During the debate over methyl iodide, the president of the Santa Cruz County chapter of the Farm Bureau, Chris Enright, visited the PVUSD superintendent “to discuss our concerns over teacher and student activism aimed at our local farmers who are not breaking any laws” (Enright 2011:2). The value of the contributions farmers and growers make to the Santa Cruz County economy is privileged over the concerns presented by students and teachers with respect to their health and that of their farmworker parents. Enright’s condescension continued: “Our unmatched agricultural resources are too often taken for granted. We in the United States are blessed with a tremendous food supply – a fact that young minds can hardly grasp, albeit time will later teach them to appreciate” (2011:7).

The inequalities inherent to past and current agribusiness labor and production practices co-produce poverty and children’s and parents’ educational and survival struggles. Meanwhile, free pencils, pep-talks, and donations serve as barely palliative philanthropic gestures from agribusinesses. Student, teacher, and parents’ efforts to address these contradictions received condescending and dismissive responses from the industry. Instead, activist students and their teacher instigators were urged to serve

agribusiness by “[excelling] in science to help growers find successful ways to produce healthy food” (Enright 2011:7).

Grant Cycles, Life Cycles

Educational Advancement, Health and Wellness, and Communities and Basic Needs are the three key foci of Driscoll’s Philanthropy Department and serve as the foundation of their annual grant making and berry donation efforts (Driscoll’s 2012). Each year, organizations and programs that serve farmworkers and their children are invited to apply for funding from Driscoll’s, which cites its guiding philosophies for giving:

Driscoll’s philanthropy is about inspiring and being inspired to create amazing places to live using the same values that guide our business: Passion, Trustworthiness, and Humility. We believe in strengthening the communities that make our work possible through an investment in farm workers and their families. In our communities, farm workers face tremendous barriers to success, even as they make our industry possible. That is why Driscoll’s Regional Grant Program aims to play a valued and influential role in supporting solutions that strive for equitable farm worker access to services, civic engagement, and well being through an investment in education, health, and family unity. (ibid)

None of the farmworkers I interviewed or met who worked on Driscoll’s or Reiter Affiliated Companies contracted farms ever mentioned benefiting directly from company philanthropy programs. The only side benefits they mentioned were that their supervisors threw occasional work-place celebrations, offered free lunches, or gave away company-logo gear to reward workers for meeting monthly or annual quotas or for remaining injury free for a certain time period. More often than not, our conversations focused on struggles for basic survival that could not be attained by two farmworker incomes let alone one. The ironic emphasis in the mission statement on “barriers to success” and “equitable farmworker access to services, civic engagement, and well

being” places responsibility for those social tenets and community values into the hands of non-profits and schools and on individual farmworkers themselves.

I did witness and participate in some of the laudable and culturally competent work of area schools and programs that had received some funding from Driscoll’s, like the Migrant Education Young Farmworkers’ School program discussed above. However, there are inherent contradictions entailed in the practice of setting up separate capital funds driven by surplus corporate revenue in order to address farmworker health and welfare problems. Care work is reduced to an act of investment and “amazing communities” get made and defined by companies in their own image. Online profiles of successful growers and higher ranking field employees – almost all men, a mixture of whites and Latinos – emphasized the importance of hard work in achieving success. The stories of farmworkers who have not been promoted despite decades of loyalty and labor are absent.

The labors of farmworkers that enable Driscoll’s success are acknowledged by growers and agribusiness leaders as *invaluable*. “*They make our industry possible*” – beams the Driscoll’s philanthropy program grant application. The decisions about who gets these grants are made by members of the Philanthropy Department. Farmworkers are removed from the process other than as the presumed benefactors of the work done on their behalf by organizations, schools, or service providers. Grants are preferentially awarded to organizations or programs that:

Explicitly include and target farm workers and their families in program development and organizational leadership; Are family focused programs; Respond to current and emerging farm worker needs and issues, especially issues of health and education; Demonstrate strong involvement from Driscoll’s stakeholders, either as clients, volunteers, donors, or board members. (ibid).

How farmworkers get “included” or “targeted” in organizational development and leadership is defined very narrowly by the company. Certain kinds of engagement and activity geared towards farmworkers and their family members are valued over others. Some are explicitly discouraged in the workplace through the threat of firing or implicitly with the maintenance of lower than livable wages. For instance, the United Farm Workers Union has historically worked with farmworkers in leadership positions to “respond to current and emerging farmworker needs and issues” (Driscoll’s Philanthropy 2012) like the *need* for a living wage, decent health care and workers’ compensation benefits, fair and humane treatment at work, and protection from pesticides and other workplace hazards. Yet union involvement by farmworkers is strongly discouraged if not illegally prohibited by most growers. The vast majority of strawberry harvesters are non-unionized, with the exception of CB North (Dole) and the organic fields worked by Swanton Berry Farm employees. Overall, the UFW’s effectiveness in supporting farmworker-centered organizing activity (versus political campaign work) on the Central Coast is minimal.

The corporate and institutional structures that reproduce farmworkers’ suffering are not questioned or addressed through Driscoll’s philanthropy program, or any of the other companies engaged in charitable giving. Annual gifts of \$10,000 to select programs that meet corporate-donor designated qualifications cannot effectively address or change these lived realities of the violence of capitalism that are embedded in agribusiness: past and present.

The Return of the Company Clinic

As I attempted to make networks and build relationships with people throughout the agricultural hierarchy in the Pájaro Valley, I reached out to the Philanthropy

Department at Driscoll's. I had heard from other researchers and service providers about the company's locally proclaimed "progressive" programs and business practices, and I requested an opportunity to observe this work in action. My access was promptly denied. Within the corporate hierarchy, the Philanthropy Department answered to *Marketing*. The then director wrote me an email:

Dear Ms. Saxton,

I received your proposal from [the assistant director of philanthropy] and thank you for your interest in Driscoll's. Driscoll's pursues its social responsibility and philanthropy because it is consistent with the values of our family-owned, private company. We do not do these things to gain publicity and therefore must decline your offer.

*Warm regards,
Director of Marketing*

This response came well before I became involved in the campaign against methyl iodide or other activist research activities. As an anthropologist, I learned to interpret these official and unofficial silences. The email response by Driscoll's Director of Marketing is one example. I also gleaned information through my work as an engaged observer. A salmon luncheon spread had been arranged on a small buffet table in the CEO and CFO lobby at Driscoll's headquarters. It included unblemished fresh fruits and vegetables, baby greens salads, and gourmet desserts. These lavish meals stood in marked contrast to the unmarketable but edible offerings in the food bank bags carried home by farmworker families. Higher ranking employees would dine casually at a local café in Watsonville, talking business, discussing the international expansion of berry growing into Portugal and Morocco, and expressing anxieties about the shortage of workers that seemed to get worse and worse each passing year.

Based on these observations and interactions and discussions with farmworkers and those charged with intervening in their health and serving them to meet basic daily needs, I came to see directly how some agribusinesses co-produce both the problems and the so called solutions for farmworkers. This is especially evident in agribusiness-sponsored clinics and employee health and wellness programs.

Eventually, through a connection with another social scientist, I had the opportunity to interview the coordinator of the health and wellness program founded by Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC): the berry growing arm of Driscoll's. RAC is known as a progressive business among non-profit directors, university researchers, and politicians. Its new employee clinics, its health insurance options that are available (but not mandatory) to all employees, and the founding of a farmworker employee wellness program known as *Sembrando Salud* are praised as positive models for other agribusinesses to follow. At the AgSafe conferences I attended in 2011 and 2012, a number of panelists presented on the trend of offering employees incentives for reducing their Body Mass Indexes (BMI), blood pressure, blood glucose, and cholesterol measurements. They argued that instating these employee wellness programs would improve worker productivity and efficiency in addition to lowering people's risks of contracting these chronic diseases.

RAC's clinics, named *Fresalud* (a play on the Spanish words for strawberry, *fresa*, and health, *salud*), are located in the major berry growing centers of Pájaro Valley, Salinas, Oxnard, and Santa Maria. RAC's employee wellness program, called *Sembrando Salud* (Sowing Health), is modeled on a similar health education program in

Mexico. It was being piloted in Oxnard, Pájaro Valley, and Jalisco, Mexico during the time of my research.

The UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (WCAHS), a multidisciplinary research group, honored RAC in 2009 with an award for their efforts in developing safety training and employee health services and educational programs. As Dr. Marc Schenker, a farmworker health researcher and the director of the WCAHS noted, “Reiter Affiliated Companies is...an amazingly forward-thinking operation It is the first agricultural firm in the nation to provide private health clinics for farm workers” (WCAHS 2009).

The Fresalud clinics join other company clinics that are springing up all over the U.S. This model differs in some ways from the company clinics of the past. The company doctor and clinic of the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, according to Starr, enabled companies to treat injuries that routinely resulted from accidents working in the mines, on the railroads, and in the factories (1982:200). Later, employers used preemployment health screenings during the hiring process as a means of maximizing the productivity of the workforce. These ideas were adapted from theories of Taylorist scientific management. Moreover:

Employers had a practical interest in using medical services for recruiting and selecting workers, maintaining their capacity and motivation to work, keeping down liability and insurance costs, and gaining good will from their employees and the public. But they did not want to pay for medical services or the hidden costs of disease that their workers or the community would otherwise bear (ibid:200)

Today, private companies in an array of industries, from car manufacturers to printing presses and retail giants like Lowe’s (Spector 2010), are providing direct, lower-cost health care to their employees either at work or nearby (Fuhrmans 2005; LaPenna

2009; Pyrrillis 2012; Conn 2000; Liddick 2005; Freudenheim 2007). These employer-sponsored programs include special contractual agreements with locally based private practices, specialists, hospitals, and health care management corporations like Comprehensive Health Services that specialize in providing on-site workplace health care. Other companies hire doctors and nurses directly or create their own medical subsidiaries in addition to funding and building their own on-site clinics (Liddick 2005; Pyrrillis 2012; Freudheim 2007).

Companies outline their own motivations for taking this approach to employee health and wellness. Business, management, and medical journals and periodicals in addition to popular press articles document the development of this market-based trend in health care delivery and reform in the U.S.. These articles highlight the role of employer-sponsored health care in maintaining or improving worker productivity and loyalty. This is accomplished by emphasizing preventative medicine including patient lifestyle changes and careful and regular monitoring of chronic diseases by physicians. This approach, proponents argue, reduces worker sick leave, which in addition to keeping workers on the job, protects them from lost hours and income (Freudenheim 2007).

The contractual relationship between a company and a health care service provider lowers the employers' insurance costs amidst massive increases in employer healthcare costs. These relationships guarantee the health care provider a steady stream of patients, and positions the employer to broker the costs of these services. The model also seeks to reduce costs by emphasizing the role of medical diagnostic and treatment protocols and prescribing cheaper generic drugs so as to reduce

unnecessary expenditures and visits to expensive out-of-network specialists. According to LaPenna: "...The model uses population management tools from the managed care environment as well as best practices from a variety of clinical fields... This model is medically and financially beneficial for both the company and its workforce" (2009:88). Another reviewer of the new company clinic model noted the added benefit of liability protection stating that the quality of the care received by employees is so good that "...None of our customers has been successfully sued...We *indemnify* our customers [the companies]" (Liddick 2005 emphasis added).

Other authors emphasized that for many employees, the concerns about patient confidentiality at work did not outweigh the benefits of receiving easy-to-access low-cost care (Conn 2000). Doctors employed by the new company clinics emphasized their professional independence from their sponsors. One interviewed by Conn (2000) insisted: "These are not company stores. They're independent medical centers even though they're company sponsored." When I interviewed the CEO and CFO of a local non-profit clinic, which had agribusiness representatives on their board of trustees, they too, asserted their professional autonomy as health care providers from fiscal sponsors or outsider advisers. Doctors employed by companies either directly or by contract talked about how electronic records, firewalls, legalized patient privacy protections like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), and strict doctor-patient confidentiality norms protected patients from employer medical surveillance. Most of the case studies cited featured non-unionized companies. According to Freudenheim (2007), many foreign, non-unionized firms, akin to the transnational mineral mining companies located in third world countries studied by Rajak (2010), Fig (2005) and

Foreit et al. (1991), prefer the convenience of private, onsite clinics over other options. Foreit et al. (ibid) lauded the role of company clinics in significantly reducing childhood morbidity rates in rural mining villages in Peru, and encouraged adoption of this model as a development strategy in other developing country company towns.

All of these in-house employee health care and clinic programs in the U.S. entail voluntary enrollment, as does the one run by RAC. Farmworker employees pay a low weekly fee, starting at \$2 for an individual, and capping at \$6 for three or more dependents. These fees grant farmworker employees access to the Fresalud clinics, which feature no-cost (e.g. no additional co-pays) comprehensive health care: exams, preventative medicine, chronic disease management, curative care for acute illnesses, access to generic prescriptions, vaccines, x-rays, pediatrics, and lab work. The clinics are exclusively for RAC farmworker employees and their dependents and all on-site services are 100 percent free of additional charge. According to Felipa Morales, the wellness program coordinator for RAC:

There was a vision, it was to provide a service, it's not insurance, the clinics are a service And the idea was to be a service that was responsive that is immediate, that is efficient and consistent. So when they come to their...appointment they can walk away with their medication and they see the doctor and they go home and don't pay anything additional...

Originally, the idea to start an in-house clinic came from the HR department as a strategy to recruit and retain farmworker employees. Felipa also notes that the idea for Fresalud was in the works long before the Affordable Care Act and its employer requirements came into existence. The financing and maintenance of the Fresalud clinics has since shifted from HR to the Philanthropy Department. According to Felipa, this transition indicated that providing health care to farmworker employees also fit with the company's principles, "that we take care of our employees."

Employees can also opt to enroll in a more traditional employer-sponsored group health insurance plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield, along with separate dental and vision care options. This option proved unpopular and very cost prohibitive for most farmworker employees. I met one worker who opted to purchase the dental option only in order to take care of a long neglected problem with her teeth. She was one of two farmworkers I met who participated in any of RAC's health insurance, clinic, or wellness programs. Angelica, the wife of a foreman employed by RAC, used the Fresalud clinic for her health care needs. When asked about her experiences there, she simply replied that the wait times were long. This parallels people's experiences with the non-profit clinics in the community as well as the great need for affordable or no-cost health care for farmworkers. Her husband, Diego, enrolled in the clinic program as well but never used the service. Questions that will be pursued in future research include: What is the quality of the doctors in these clinics? What do the farmworkers who use these clinics think about the care they receive? How do these company clinics compare to the non-profit clinics in the region?

A different, private clinic in town is contracted to evaluate the company's workers' compensation cases through RAC's workers' compensation insurance policy. Felipa insists that claims are quite low due to excellent injury prevention and worker safety measures implemented in the fields. At the RAC HR offices where I interviewed Felipa, there were shelves upon shelves holding thousands of red file folders. The office manager informed me that each one contained a different workers' compensation claim. On the door of one HR staff member's office, a poster featuring a giant watchful eye

discouraged workers' comp fraud in Spanish and English. The imagery represented the vigilance with which injured workers would be evaluated and scrutinized.

As noted in Chapter 3, the statement from a company representative that the injury rate at RAC is low contradicts the lived experiences of the RAC, Driscoll's and other farmworkers I interviewed. I once observed a RAC HR employee accompanying a farmworker to a workers' compensation medical exam at the clinic I attended during fieldwork for my own health care needs. In the waiting room, they filled out official paperwork together. The worker experienced pain, discomfort and hearing loss from a piece of dirt that had lodged in her ear canal while at work. While the worker at least received an examination and likely some form of palliative care or treatment for her condition, presumably paid for by the company's workers' compensation insurance, it felt disconcerting and invasive to have one's employer accompany one to a doctor's appointment.

In addition to basic health care services, the overwhelming focus at Fresalud in the Pájaro and Salinas Valleys is on diabetes and obesity management and prevention. RAC, the Fresalud doctors, and researchers from UC Davis and UC Berkeley, identified these diseases as the primary health problems affecting farmworkers and their children. This is also reflected in the high number of organizations dedicated to diabetes and obesity prevention in the Watsonville area: ranging from the youth empowerment club Jovenes Sanos (Healthy Youth), to the food banks, non-profit clinics, the Pájaro Valley Health Trust and its Diabetes Health Center, and state and county programs like Women Infants and Children (WIC), California First 5, and Campiones de Cambio (Champions of Change).

Felipa, who has a MPH degree from the University of California, explained the risk factors for farmworkers:

I think in all districts workers are prone [to diabetes and obesity] for different reasons that are obvious. Access to healthy food is limited. Where they live, access to opportunities to do physical activity are very limited. [In Pájaro and Salinas] the population [farmworkers] is more stable...they live here and they have families here. That means they have been living here longest...they have been residents of this area longer which implies that they have situated and adapted new behaviors.

In her response, Felipa summarized the main tenets of the Latino Health Paradox in order to explain to me why diabetes and obesity affect so many farmworkers in the area, and also how the work of RAC's Philanthropy department is addressing the needs of farmworker employees (the population). The theory purports that immigrant families are healthier upon first arriving to the U.S.. After a period of time during which immigrant families adapt to life in the U.S., including heavily processed foods, high stress jobs with low wages and long hours, isolation and cultural deterioration, and decreased physical activity, they become more vulnerable to chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and high blood pressure, known collectively as metabolic syndrome (Rios and Rodriguez 2008). The Latino Health Paradox or Paradigm is extremely problematic for a number of reasons. It makes generalizations and assumptions about Latinos, a group that is in reality very heterogeneous even at the national level (Viruelle-Fuentes 2007; Falcón et al. 2001). It pathologizes individual cultures or behaviors as the root causes of health problems amongst minorities living in the U.S. (Viruelle Fuentes 2007; Santiago-Irizarry 2001; Taylor 2003; Horton and Barker 2010a, 2010b). The degradation of cultures as either healthy or unhealthy in the clinical or health intervention context can discourage health-promoting characteristics that immigrants bring with them to the U.S. (Gálvez 2011). It privileges biomedical

knowledge, devaluing the health-based knowledge that immigrants already possess (Minkoff-Zern 2012). Along these lines, assumptions about culture made by a clinician can affect the kinds and quality of health care offered to immigrant patients (Hunt and de Voogd 2005; Lee and Farrell 2006). Historical legacies of colonialism and contemporary patterns of imperialism become embodied and impact processes of dietary and health changes transnationally are not taken into consideration when evaluating changes in health (Wiedman 2012; Martínez 2012). The roles of racism, classism, sexism, and heteronormativity (Vega 2009) and the ways in which these different oppressions and other structural inequalities such as geographic isolation, anti-immigrant policies, and occupational and environmental hazards intersect and manifest in the body are also overlooked by the broad generalizations of the Latino Health Paradox (Weber 2006; Zambrana and Thorton Dill 2006; Azevedo and Bogue 2001; Cartwright 2011).

Another RAC-sponsored farmworker employee health initiative, *Sembrando Salud* (Sowing Health), features a ten-week program modeled on a similar health education program from Mexico called *5 Pasos* (5 Steps). Workers who enroll attend classes after work where they learn about the importance of drinking enough water, eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, incorporating physical activity into daily routines, watching portion size, and knowing one's basic health measurements, like height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, triglycerides, and blood glucose levels. Felipa reassured me during our interview that the classes were adapted to meet the needs of migrant farmworkers living in the U.S., with the advisory and evaluative assistance of migrant health experts and specialists at U.C. Berkeley and U.C. Davis. RAC hired peer

educators to deliver the information using accessible language, visual teaching tools, and hands-on activities like cooking and yoga classes for individuals of mixed education and literacy levels.

The program aims to help workers figure out how to incorporate moderate exercise into daily life, acknowledging the long hours most spend in the fields and that going for a jog or joining the gym may not be realistic or appropriate options. Emphasis is placed on bringing back health traditions from Mexico that may have been lost as a result of immigration and the adoption of more processed foods or the culture of the automobile in the U.S. (Huber 2011). Participants are also introduced to new information and methods. Traditional recipes deemed unhealthy are adapted to reduce fat and calorie content (Huber 2011; Hadly 2010). The program is family friendly, as it aspires to encourage better lifestyle choices for the children of farmworkers as well. They, too, are experiencing rising rates of diabetes and obesity (Hadly 2010; UCLA Center for Health Policy Research 2012).

So far, 600 RAC employees in Mexico and California have participated in Sembrando Salud (Hadly 2010). Felipa expressed her excitement over the preliminary results and indicated that RAC planed to expand the program to other production districts in Mexico and California in the near future: “It was implemented last year [2010] and has been successful. We have seen...a very good response from our participants, from our workers....we’ve seen positive outcomes.” To date, no reviews of the program have been published in academic journals. A Sembrando Salud powerpoint, developed in-house by RAC, featured an array of bar graphs highlighting the “statistically significant” impacts of the program. RAC staff and outside researchers collected this

data with participant surveys and questionnaires in addition to before-and-after biometric measurements like BMI and blood glucose levels. A YouTube video produced by BerryMex (RAC's Mexican subsidiary) and La Fundación Mexicana para el Desarrollo Rural, A.C. features worker testimonies about how the program has educated them to make better lifestyle choices and features B-roll imagery of farmworkers doing stretches, exercising with hula-hoops, and receiving the 5 Pasos curriculum from community health promoters in the fields (Fundación Mexicana 2011). Their "testimonies of "self care", "improved worker productivity" "better choices", the importance of monitoring one's "numbers," and the value of a company that takes care of its workers, appear more like scripted narratives that mimic corporate discourses rather than examples of lived experiences.

Conclusion

In Santa Maria and Oxnard, berry growing centers to the south of Watsonville on California's coast, many RAC employees are migrant, mobile, and male: moving from worksite to worksite up and down the west coast with the harvests. Felipa explained that while these workers are also vulnerable to diabetes and obesity, it was more difficult to get them to enroll in the clinic and wellness programs offered by RAC.

It is more of a challenge to...sell them the idea of health [...] They might move from one branch to another so...they are not loyal to our ranches. [It helps explain] the STD rates because we see more single men, versus here [in Pájaro and Salinas] we see more families.

Certainly, these challenges of getting folks to seek medical care when they need it are not unique to the RAC employee wellness programs or clinics. Cost, lack of transportation, culturally incompetent and sometimes insensitive health care providers,

prioritization of children's health, and difficulties navigating the U.S. health care system are among the many barriers farmworkers face in accessing health care.

Many farmworkers do live and struggle with diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and weight gain, along with the social and moral scrutiny and stigma that shape people's lived experiences with these chronic diseases. Concerns about these health problems came up frequently in my interviews and informal discussions with farmworkers, as did the struggles family members face in caring for people in more advanced stages of diabetes (e.g. those with amputations and nerve damage) and heart disease (e.g. stroke and heart attack victims). Researchers have also documented the alarming rise of STIs in farmworker communities, as well as the spread of HIV/AIDS in rural Mexican immigrant sending communities. This is coupled with a health infrastructure in rural Mexico that is ill-prepared to work with HIV/AIDS patients (Bronfman, et al. 2002; López 2008; Castañeda and Zavella 2003; Zavella and Castañeda 2005; Magis-Rodriguez et al. 2004; Gutmann 2007).

Contrary to the assertions of the Latino Health Paradox, which emphasize uneven processes of acculturation amongst immigrants as the key factors influencing their health, some anthropologists attribute these health vulnerabilities as they are experienced by farmworkers to structural violence (Benson 2008a; Holmes 2007). In the context of farm work, Benson acknowledges "the role of corporations, markets, and governments in fostering various kinds of harm in populations" versus the popular attribution of violence and suffering to individual actors (2008a:590, citing Farmer 2004:308). Agribusiness philanthropy and CSR and RAC's efforts to offer in-house health care as a service to employees more specifically go beyond commitments to

caring or a means to retain workers and foster their loyalty. They go beyond the benefits of company clinics professed by the business community: decreased sick days, increased worker productivity, reduced health care costs, and mitigated liabilities. These in-house corporate employee health interventions – with the technical, design, and evaluative assistance of university researchers, occupational health scientists, and private health care consultancies, and increasingly with the praise of the federal government (Mayfield 2011) – effectively depoliticize worker health. RAC's farmworker employee health programs emphasize and reiterate the individual employee's personal responsibility for health. They neglect the very "forces that constrain decision making, frame choices, and limit life options" which they play an active role in producing and perpetuating (Quesada et al. 2011:342).

Also at issue is how the problems of "others", in this case farmworkers, come to be defined. As Guthman notes, the power relations imbued in processes of problem identification and solving in expert circles "...tend to overdramatize some elements and underspecify others, especially those that might lead to different conceptualizations of the problem" (2011:25). Race, class, and gender inequalities at work and at home in the Pájaro Valley, rarely, if ever, come up as areas of appropriate intervention. Instead, individual bodies and communities and their cultures, behaviors, and lifestyle choices are targeted for change. In the case of education, its bad teachers, bad parents, and bad students (more individuals). In the case of hunger, it is inadequate food supply versus insufficient income (ibid:175).

Anthropologists and social scientists are often consulted in the development of programs and interventions meant to improve the life conditions of farmworkers. While

in the current moment there is a great need for services and assistance amongst farmworker families, I propose shifting the emphasis of interventions from the impoverished to those directly involved in implementing the violence of capitalism. It is time to bite the hand that feeds. We can re-conceptualize the problem and in so doing, the politics of the possible.

CHAPTER 6

(RE)IMAGINING FARMWORKER SOLIDARITY

. . . We must act in solidarity with those rendered vulnerable by a pathogenic system, and strive against the oppressions. Critical medical anthropology can contribute to a more complex understanding of this process by recognizing the part of the pathogenic process is often inherent in the structure itself.

—Cartwright and Manderson, *Diagnosing the Structure*

After reading this dissertation, one may be led to believe that I am making a functionalist argument: that the agribusiness system is perpetually self-maintaining and unchanging. However, this is not my intention. Instead, in recounting farmworkers' experiences with workers' compensation, pesticides, state and non-profit services, and the emergence of agribusiness sponsored corporate social responsibility and philanthropy projects, I want to convey the horrendous inequalities and imbalances of power between workers and those who control food production on many different fronts and the consequences of these social relations. So much of the literature on farmworker health focuses on the occupational setting exclusively, without considering, as Rajak asserts "[the] connections between the personal realm...and family life and the political economy of global corporate capitalism" (2010:552). This dissertation puts the relationships between on the farm and off the farm practices and policies into focus in an effort to instigate new ways of thinking about the problems faced by farmworkers. I also want to propose alternative ways of framing and redressing social and environmental suffering beyond the level of the individual, behavior, or culture.

I have explored several "pathogenic systems" (Cartwright and Manderson 2011:453) that appear protective of workers on paper but fundamentally fail in practice, resulting in unconscionable human and environmental harm. These laws and practices

are ridden with conflicts and contradictions; the goals of creating a benevolent, safe, and healthy society through the implementation of policies and voluntary, market-sponsored interventions and practices cannot work when the underlying philosophies, practices, structures, and motives of corporate agribusiness remain unquestioned or when inequalities are assumed to be natural and unavoidable. This work is an analysis of a sick system, whose many complex layers translate into layered disparities and layered vulnerabilities within individual bodies and reverberating throughout entire farmworker families and communities.

Certainly, there are members of the agribusiness community and among their non-profit and state partners who *care* about farmworker welfare and health. Yet, we have reached a point in the realm of farmworker health where caring, kindness, generosity, and programs, policies and interventions targeted at farmworkers cannot and do not work. They consistently fail to acknowledge, address, and alter the root causes of farmworker social and environmental suffering.

As Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, state policies with respect to workers' compensation and pesticide regulation, deemed progressive compared to other regions in the United States, or even other parts of the world, can mask and exacerbate farmworker health problems. Laws and agencies charged with protecting workers' rights and the environment (which are very much interconnected) have been gutted and defunded. Regulations without any real democratic or accountability structures perpetuate complacency amongst those charged with enforcing these labor and environmental laws on and off the farm. Too much reliance on the law or private market-based solutions to social problems limits the achievement of real health, social, and

environmental justice for farmworkers and rural communities in California. To protect public and environmental health, especially that of the most vulnerable workers' and residents, we must go above and beyond the limits of the law and certainly the rules of the free market which are responsible for so much suffering in ways we do not always see or recognize because they are couched in kindness, caring, and corporate social responsibility.

As a case in point, many members of the general public at my field site believed that Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers Union had already secured sufficient rights and protections for farmworkers. While the work of the UFW did improve some things, including working conditions and exacting stronger worker protections and pesticide rules, many of these gains have been lost or weakened over time. These false understandings of change as a *moment in time* instead of a *process*, and the over-reliance on policy change alone to redress social wrongs actively prevents the development and implementation of alternative possibilities and realities for the integral and interdependent realms of agriculture, food, labor, and environment. In so doing, injustice is perpetuated, structural violence and market-based approaches are normalized, and vulnerabilities are accepted as inevitable. This is true even if it happens unintentionally or unknowingly. Thus, policies, regulations, and laws alone cannot improve the lives of farmworkers or other disenfranchised, poor, or marginalized people without considering preexisting power imbalances and lawmaker relationships with industries. There is no affirmative action for farmworkers in which these harmful power structures are addressed or resolved with respect to lawmaking, but perhaps there should be.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I have outlined the failures and the contradictions of agribusiness, state, and non-profit sponsored programs and aid geared towards helping farmworkers and their families. As Lipsky (2010 [1982]) reminds us, it is a lot easier to hire people to manage these issues at the surface level than to systemically address the legacies and affects of inequalities on human health and welfare and the roles of the state in perpetuating these problems in covert or overt collaboration with private businesses. It is also common for private and non-profit organizations serving farmworkers to resemble the very corporate and institutional cultures responsible for sustaining the many intersecting oppressions and inequalities described in this dissertation. In this way, non-profits and philanthropy, as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects “encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than to challenge them” (Smith 2007:3). This has happened with labor unions as well, including the UFW, which took corporate sponsorship from Budweiser to celebrate its 50th anniversary and often works closely with Democratic party members who have close ties to agricultural and other industries. This, along with interpersonal conflicts and internal power struggles, has compromised the work they have been able to accomplish over the last 30 years. The organizational hierarchy too often leaves workers behind.

When examining the history of non-profits, philanthropies, corporate paternalism and CSR, we learn that corporations and businesses created these endeavors to placate workers who demanded better working conditions, protections, and wages (Smith 2007:3). In this respect, it is not surprising that the Fresalud clinics described in Chapter 5 bear an eerie resemblance to the original UFW member clinics that opened in

farm working towns in California in the 1970s. However, instead of using health care as an organizing tool to politicize workers, Reiter Affiliated Companies offer this “service” to farmworkers as a means of fostering employee loyalty and cutting business expenses. The co-optation of justice is also very evident with the corporate appropriation of organic foods (Guthman 2004), voluntary pesticide drift mitigation programs (Harrison 2011), diabetes and obesity research (Guthman 2011), and what Brown and Getz (2008) describe as “the privatization of farmworker justice”:

Unlike more traditional forms of social justice organizing, which have historically sought to alter power relations between labor, capital, and the state, the very notion that production conditions can be regulated through voluntary, third-party monitoring and labeling embraces several key neoliberal principles: the primacy of the market as a mechanism for addressing environmental and social ills, the privatization of regulatory functions previously reserved for the public sphere, and the assertion of the individual rights and responsibilities of citizen–consumers (1184).

As Ahn (2007:63-64) observes with respect to public complacency with non-profits, charities, and other corporate sponsored benevolence programs:

Many Americans are seduced by the idea that piecemeal voluntary efforts [including consumption] can somehow replace a systematic public approach to eliminating poverty. But this reasoning is based on the inherent falsehood that scarcity – rather than inequality – is at the root of these persisting social and economic problems. This worldview nurtures a culture of noblesse oblige, the belief that the wealthy and privileged are obliged to help those less fortunate, without examining how that wealth was created or the dangerous implications of conceding such power to the wealthy.

Reconciling the contradictions between concern and kindness, short-term voluntary and philanthropic commitments, and the daily struggles faced by California's (im)migrant farmworkers is no easy feat. One way to start would be to engage in the processes necessary to deeply interrogate the origins of social and environmental suffering. Benson et al. (2008:40) emphasize the roles that anthropology can play in resocializing suffering by “tracing [its] origins to sociopolitical and economic conditions

and by analyzing experiences of violence in the context of everyday social engagements and attitudes.” This could include anti-racism work. This is an essential component with respect to working with (im)migrant groups in the U.S. because they are so regularly scapegoated for many of the country's economic and social problems.

Anthropologists who assume the roles of public scholars have critical roles to play in facilitating this very difficult process. Translating the work we usually do in the university classroom – wherein the concepts of race, culture, and nature are deconstructed and mobilized to foster greater understanding and empathy for different communities – into formats that are accessible and approachable to a wide variety of audiences is work that must be done if we want to foster stronger popular support for farmworkers and other marginalized groups in the U.S.. This entails both reflection at the individual level as well as collective responses. The Santa Cruz County Community Coalition to Overcome Racism (SCCCCOR) provided an inspiring model during my field work with respect to public education on racism. Their strategy involved collective retellings of local history. Instead of casting blame on privileged individuals, organizers encouraged participants to first acknowledge and then mobilize their various privileges (race, gender, class, citizenship status, health, age, sexual orientation, etc.) in support of or in solidarity with those who suffered under the status quo. It is an intersectional approach that acknowledges the different layers of oppression and addresses them simultaneously through organizing work: not piece-meal.

A serious challenge to this work entails breaking down people's resistance to alternative conceptualizations of racism and oppression without alienating participants. Dictionary definitions of race and racism have a hegemonic effect on public

consciousness with respect to one's abilities to upset power imbalances (Tatum 2008). One strategy might entail demonstrating how these pathogenic systems affect everyone, albeit very unevenly: to re-conceptualize these problems as shared vulnerabilities. When I described my work researching the workers' compensation system to folks outside of my academic circles, many working and middle class friends and acquaintances shared with me their own struggles with work-related injuries and illnesses. Fostering trans-worker solidarity around the issue of occupational safety and workers' compensation can help generate the energy and organizing necessary to create a universal health care and social insurance system that better attends to the many needs of work-injured and ill workers and their families. At present, the practice of transferring the economic and social costs of care to workers' families and communities constitutes a hidden subsidy to agribusinesses. Corporations evade their responsibilities to injured workers through legal exemptions and by taking advantage of workers' economic and social vulnerabilities, including citizenship status, to prevent complaints, claims, and lawsuits from transpiring. The consequences are severe strain on care workers and community services as well as the work injured who are not getting what they need from the current pathogenic workers' compensation system.

During my research, trans-community solidarity became a critical component of anti-pesticide activism. The mostly white organizers from northern Santa Cruz County understood pesticides as endangering their personal and family health as consumers of strawberries. This was reiterated in a common picket line demand "No Cancer Berries": a framing also used by professional anti-pesticide organizers to garner mainstream support against toxic soil fumigants like methyl iodide. At an anti-methyl iodide protest in

Salinas in March of 2011, a number of Latino farmworkers and their children and grandchildren gathered at a major intersection. The kids made signs featuring pleas and questions to the Arysta sales representatives and growers who had planned to meet in a hotel across the street that day (a sales pitch meeting on Arysta's part). "Strawberries or my life?" and "I need to breath" contrasted with white consumers' concerns about their rights to eat foods free of contamination. Farmworker families who participated in protests emphasized their very different embodied experiences as rural residents who worked and lived in close proximity to pesticide applications, and who faced disproportionate health risks compared to consumers. The combination of strawberry pickers' pleas and strawberry consumers' demands at the grassroots level in the Monterey Bay region led to a surprising but much celebrated outcome: the retraction of methyl iodide from the U.S. market by Arysta LifeScience and the cancelation of the pesticide's U.S. EPA registration. It has also produced more sustained and collaborative work among white activists and brown workers and labor advocates that aims to phase out all toxic soil fumigant pesticides by the year 2020. Still, much work is still needed in order to better engage and involve farmworker communities in these campaigns. This includes a more intentional integration and privileging of their experiences and ideas into organizing strategies. Too many text-heavy informational flyers written in a form of Spanish that was not used or understood by campesinos created a number of missed opportunities. This was also perpetuated, if unintentionally, by the non-profit professional anti-pesticide organizing leadership that was predominately white and far removed from the daily lives of farmworkers: in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and Washington, DC. Making those operational funds directly available to the

communities affected by pesticide exposure and hiring locals to lead and organize campaigns would be a more effective and ethical use of those non-profit funds.

Because there is such strong resistance to regulation from agribusinesses, incentives need to be created in order to ease the financial burdens required to develop more effective safety and public and environmental health standards and protections on and off the farm. What if the U.S. government offered subsidies to growers and farmers of fresh produce to augment farmworkers' seasonal salaries and to develop ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable agricultural production methods? These discounts or grants could reward growers and farmers for phasing out soil fumigants and other toxic pesticides, for prioritizing worker-driven and approved occupational safety and health initiatives, and constructing decent, affordable, year-round farmworker family housing. At present, only the growers of commodity crops, like corn, wheat, and soy, are subsidized. These crops, while significantly less dependent on farm labor, constitute another pathogenic system within U.S. Agriculture. Current farm subsidies cause their own sets of social and environmental harms including: soil erosion, water pollution, heavy dependence on pesticides, global political manipulation of countries that receive food aid from the U.S., the over-production of processed foods and additives that may be in part responsible for a number of chronic illnesses, the destruction of small-scale farming families and communities, and the further consolidation and commercial development of land. Changing how subsidies work could help mitigate the transfer of vulnerabilities from growers to farmworkers in the fresh produce industry.

At present, California growers are not responsible for farmworkers during the off-season. Based on my observations and experiences in the field, the six months when most farmworkers are out of work is one of the most difficult times. Social suffering for farmworkers is constant, but fluctuates with the seasonal cycles of harvesting and planting. The increased patronage of food banks and pantries from November through March is evidence of this. Yet, (im)migrant farmworkers, despite the contributions they make to the economy, are seen as a drain on the system. While documented workers can collect unemployment insurance, undocumented workers are ineligible for this social insurance even though funds from their paychecks are deducted and put into the state social security and disability fund and the local, state, and federal tax reserves. Medi-Cal is also taken out of farmworker pay checks but farmworkers cannot receive this benefit and are outright excluded from the Affordable Care Act. People who pay into these social insurance plans must be permitted to access these resources when they need them (Hirsch and Vasquez 2009). Increased government support of the people who grow and harvest the nation's *real* food supply would be a sounder expenditure than the current plan for increased border militarization.

While some (im)migrant farmworkers returned to Mexico during the off season, where they could farm their own land and get support from family members, heightened border militarization has interrupted these historical circuits. At present, the proposal for immigration reform includes a \$46 billion dollar budget for increasing the military, police and drone presence along the U.S.-Mexico border. This will only exacerbate vulnerabilities on both sides of the border. The current proposed reform includes the improvement of the current H2A guestworker program, such as more flexibility to

change worksites in the event of employer abuse, and new workplace and housing guarantees. Still, it requires workers to return to Mexico at the end of the season. This neglects the needs of farmworker children, whose education is already disrupted by U.S.-based migrations and the seasonal and lifelong instabilities of impoverishment. Only offering a path to citizenship to those immigrants who speak English and who possess skills and training deemed valuable to the U.S. economy will only intensify the many vulnerabilities faced by the poorest (im)migrants who include farmworkers and speakers of indigenous languages.

Another issue that affects farmworker welfare roots back to the history of Spanish and later white settlement in California. This is the horrendously unequal distribution of land. This creates inequalities not only between the farmer and farmworker classes, but also amongst growers (Wells 1996). What if California growers and farmworkers organized their farms and their workers following the *ejido* structure that emerged from the Mexican Revolution? In this way, the food and income from sales of fresh produce could be shared instead of parsed out based on false notions of skillfulness and deservingness. A more diverse array of crops could be produced, which would be much gentler on the soil and water, and the vulnerabilities, risks and responsibilities involved in growing food could also be shared more fairly. One very successful transnational agricultural firm, Del Cabo Organics, developed their business model around supporting struggling *ejido* families on the Baja peninsula in Mexico. This included the re-introduction of chemical free farming methods that worked well on the smaller-scale land holdings and sharing and reinvesting company profits within these Mexican farming communities.

Cooperative models in farming, as well as farmworker housing, child and adult care, health care, food security (Quandt et al. 2004) and other needs and endeavors, merit further attention and experimentation as alternatives to exploitative, hierarchical businesses that cause human and environmental harm. They also have the potential to address seasonal unemployment problems by diversifying crop profiles and creating year-round jobs. The *ejido* system, even from the days of the Mexican Revolution, was never perfect. It has been subject to co-optation by corporate interests, which heightened after NAFTA abolished the clause in the Mexican Constitution that prohibited the privatization of land. The (im)migrant farmworkers who were displaced by these very policies that purported and failed to offer solutions to peasant poverty should be consulted and their ideas taken seriously.

Along these lines, there are also lessons to be learned from farmworkers' own strategies of survival and from their own lay and experiential knowledge. Farmworkers navigate a complex system of social and health services, such as workers' compensation insurance, childcare services, and non profit, private, and company-sponsored clinics. Still, many technocrats and bureaucrats are hired to trouble shoot, re-organize, and streamline the operations of service provider and non-profit organizations. Why not solicit and creatively implement suggestions by and from farmworkers? They live and work amidst the most toxic substances and learn a great deal of practical knowledge from those experiences which could be complimented by technical knowledge: a reciprocal exchange amongst researchers and participants (Flocks et al. 2007) that recently proved effective in the successful struggle to ban methyl iodide.

Farmworkers also mobilized a variety of their own coping mechanisms via well established local and binational networks of care. Migrant remittances, for example, are not purely economic transactions that lead to upward mobility south of the border. They also represent acts of “care-work” where family members and friends on both sides of the border support one another through a series of monetary and non-monetary social exchanges. A significant amount of the remittances produced by farmworker families at my fieldsite contributed to the medical care and everyday survival of family members in Mexico. Family members in Mexico contributed to the wellbeing of loved ones living and working in the U.S. by providing child and eldercare. They also sent seeds, handicrafts, and Mexican products to supplement the meager incomes and subsistences of their relatives. These *reverse remittances* from Mexico also help immigrant farmworkers living and working in the U.S. by providing both emotional and social support and connection through gardening and eating traditional foods, enabling additional income generation for large extended families, and facilitating alternative, albeit precarious, forms of underground employment for permanently occupationally disabled farmworkers. Some indigenous communities in Oaxaca link with home town associations in the U.S. to channel migrant remittances into community based projects such as schools, clinics, and shared recreational spaces through the already established *tequio* or community work improvement groups (Mines et al. 2010; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2005).

Throughout my fieldwork, which included deep involvement and collaboration with the Center for Farmworker Families, founded and directed by Dr. Ann Lopez, we organized a constant stream of humanitarian aid for farmworker families with their

involvement and with help from student and church groups throughout the Bay Area. This entailed the distribution of shoes, clothes, toys, books, baby items, mattresses, furniture, household items, and school supplies. The Center combines this social relief work with activities that tackle the structural inequalities faced by bi-national families. Political scientist Jacqueline Stevens describes this “network of U.S. residents in deportation jails, attorneys, journalists, activists, scholars and students to study and challenge unlawful state violence” as the new abolitionists: “[studying] and [challenging] unlawful state violence” against undocumented migrants (2013; 2009). This combination of life sustaining and system changing work goes beyond the piece-meal and a-political work of many non-profit and philanthropic organizations. In Kivel's (2007) words:

We need to provide services for those most in need, for those trying to survive, for those barely making it. We also need to work for social change so that we create a society in which our institutions and organizations are equitable and just, and all people are safe, adequately fed and sheltered, well educated, afforded safe and decent jobs, and empowered to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. (129-130)

Professional organizations, agencies, or private programs and projects that lack or constrict critical thinking will continue to “...provide services, without addressing the structural issues as required to actually eliminate the injustice or inequality motivating people to organize in the first place” (ibid:136)

Thus, there are numerous alternative and creative possibilities with respect to addressing and resisting the abuses faced daily by (im)migrant farmworkers, and they do not have to depend on corporate benevolence, non-profit management, or foundation support. As this dissertation has shown, state, non-profit, and corporately sponsored interventions do little to address the root problems embedded within a food production system that also produces health, social, and environmental disparities.

These forces, often analyzed in isolation, are intimately interconnected. While it may be that social service, non-profit, philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility personnel and program engineers, coordinators, and outreach specialists *care* about their work and do not always *intend* for their actions to perpetuate human suffering, the farmworker health problems they seek to address are often reproduced through their strategies and individualist interventions. This coincides with what Poppendick (1998), following her fieldwork with emergency food aid organizations, described as:

The growth of kindness and the decline in justice It is symptomatic of a pervasive despair about actually solving problems that has turned us towards ways of *managing* them: damage control, rather than prevention. More significantly, and more controversially, the proliferation of charity *contributes* to our society's failure to grapple in meaningful ways with poverty. (5)

Indeed, she continues, who are all these social goods for, anyway? That so few have the power to define what is good or just is part of the problem. These are questions we need to ask ourselves as well as farmworkers before committing to policies, interventions, and proclaimed evidence-based solutions and as we continue to conceptualize an alternative politics of the possible through active engagement with the people who produce our food.

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