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Mujeres Trabajadoras: An Intersectional Perspective on Inequalities in the Working
Conditions and Lives of Mexicana Farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

by

Evelyn Pruneda

June 2017

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DEDICATION

With love and respect, this work is dedicated to mi mami y papi, who are my inspiration and my backbone. Also, to each of my grandparents who worked in the *campo* all of their lives to be able to give me this opportunity.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Mujeres Trabajadoras: An Intersectional Perspective on Inequalities in the Working Conditions and Lives of Mexicana Farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley

by

Evelyn Pruneda

Master of Arts, Sociology
University of California, Riverside, June 2017
Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

This qualitative study uses a feminist intersectional perspective to examine how the lives and working conditions of Mexican women farmworkers are shaped by inequalities that are exacerbated by the historic California drought (2011-2016). This study centers on the lives of Mexicana farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley, a community that is bound together by a shared history, but that exhibits an incredible amount of diversity and difference. Although many women farmworkers face multiple axes of oppression based on their race, class, gender, and citizenship status, the inequalities they face are not only in relation to the dominant power structures that undergird the corporations that employ them. Instead, this work seeks to understand the inequalities that exist *within* the group in order to shed light on how larger structural forces interact with the lived experiences of one of the most disenfranchised populations.

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California's San Joaquin Valley (the Valley) is one of the nation's most fertile and ethnically diverse regions. As the nation's largest producer of agricultural goods, it is home to about 800,000 workers employed at all levels of farm labor, of which approximately 400,000 work in the fields (Stoecklin et al 2011, Howitt et al 2015). Despite the high numbers of farmworkers in the Valley, there has been relatively little research focusing on the experiences of farmworkers and, in particular, women farmworkers. Although many women farmworkers face multiple axes of oppression based on their race, class, gender, and citizenship status, the inequalities they face are not only in relation to the dominant power structures that undergird the corporations that employ them. Instead, this work seeks to understand the inequalities that exist *within* the group in order to shed light on how larger structural forces interact with the lived experiences of one of the most disenfranchised populations.

The challenges and inequalities that many Valley communities face have been exacerbated by the impact of the recent five-year drought that began in 2011. This qualitative study uses a feminist intersectional approach to examine how inequalities based on gender, citizenship status, age, geographic disadvantages, and differences in the strength of social support networks shape the lives of Mexicana women farmworkers in the context of the drought. Many of these inequalities come from within the community, therefore I use the framework of intraethnic othering and internalized nativism (Pyke and Dang 2013, Perez Huber 2010, Anzaldúa 1993) as a theoretical foundation. I also employ spatial mismatch theory (Kain 1962, Kain 1992, Joassart-Marcelli 2009, Ong and Miller 2005) to highlight the challenges that are associated with the geographic disadvantages of

living in isolated, rural communities, particularly as the drought has resulted in a decrease in the number of farm labor jobs. The various social locations of the women farmworkers creates a diverse set of experiences and this work seeks to highlight the heterogeneity of experiences and identities among Mexicana farmworkers, despite their shared experience with discrimination based on race, gender, and poverty.

Women farmworkers have been a significant force throughout the evolution of California agriculture, but they are often concentrated in low paying jobs and they work in the fields and packinghouses with little support beyond the help and reinforcement of their families. Due to cultural and political factors such as racism, language barriers, and anti-immigrant sentiment, these women are often isolated from the general California population. There are approximately 2.5 million farmworkers laboring on our nation's farms and ranches with women comprising about 28% of them. Estimates of the number of undocumented farmworkers vary from approximately 48% to 70%, a number that is difficult to measure accurately because of the sensitive nature of documentation status for the survey respondents (US Department of Labor 2016). Farmworkers face this crisis and they also simultaneously confront multiple forms of oppression and do so within a climate of environmental disaster and heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia.

My research expands on the literature on intersectionality, particularly as it pertains to women and labor by highlighting the sources of inequality among Chicana farmworkers based on citizenship, occupation, strength of social networks, ageism, and geographical disadvantages. My study focuses on farmworkers residing in rural Fresno

County, which have not been studied by sociologists, in order to provide insight into the impact of the drought on some of the most disenfranchised communities. By using an intersectional framework, many of the generalizations or ignorance of the diversity among and within farmworker communities are debunked and we are able to more authentically develop a sense of their diversity (Zavella 1991). This framework attends to some of the structural barriers as well as important internal differences within the Chicana¹ community.

This paper begins with a review of relevant literature on intersectionality theory as it relates to the experiences Chicana and Mexicana workers, followed by a discussion of the construction of citizenship and “illegality.” I then discuss the concepts of *intraethnic othering* and internalized nativism in order to provide a more complex framework for understanding the ways in which inequalities and hierarchies manifest themselves among the women. Finally, I discuss relevant literature on spatial mismatch theory and include perspectives from critical feminist geography to add another dimension to the challenges that women farmworkers face as the drought has created a situation where jobs are further and fewer between. These spatial inequalities highlight the role that transportation has in the livelihoods of these women, impacting labor market opportunities and incomes.

¹ I use Chicana, Latina, and Mexicana as gender neutral identifiers that moves beyond the terms Chicano, Latino, Mexicano—a masculine identifier, as well as Chicana@, Latina@, and Mexicana@—which includes both masculine and feminine identities but is limited to a man/woman binary.

LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY AND CHICANA WORKERS

A substantial body of literature documents the complex ways in which race, class, and gender shape employment opportunities and experiences for women of color. By applying the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), race, ethnicity, gender, and class relations are no longer understood as static, independent entities whose consequences can be summarized in additive models. Rather, they are seen as intersecting systems of power relations that produce different outcomes in different historical and political contexts (Crenshaw 1989, Crenshaw 1991, Collins 1990, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997a). Crenshaw (1991) argues that because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both. Additionally in her discussion of identity politics, she argues that its failure lies not in its lack of transcending difference, but that it conflates or ignores intragroup differences. My study expands on this theory by including another dimension upon which women of color are marginalized: citizenship status. This axis drives inequalities not only from the hegemonic society, but it also serves as a mechanism by which intragroup hierarchies operate.

Zavella (1991) provides a nuanced examination of the experiences of Chicanas in the U.S. She acknowledges the commonalities and affinities with other women of color, but she emphasizes the diversity that exists within this group, including multiple histories, regional settlement patterns, certain cultural practices, sexual preferences, and “occasionally radically dissimilar political outlooks. Our solidarity as Chicanas can be

undermined by these differences among us” (Zavella 1991: 74). Furthermore, she argues that there exist commonalities in subordination produced by the intersection of race, class, and gender, but that it is important to examine the Chicana/Mexicana² culture that is “also socially constructed in ways that are misogynist, homophobic, internalized racist and class prejudiced” (75). In order to have a better understanding of Chicanas, she calls for closer attention to women’s social location within the social structure.

My interviews with Chicana farmworkers suggests that the types of jobs they get depend on several factors, including the strength of their networks, their relationship to the *mayordoma* (supervisors), their citizenship status, and their age, among other factors. This relates to Denise Segura’s (1989) work on the impact of race, gender, and class on occupational mobility among Chicanas and Mexicanas. She argues that it is important to consider how the actions and attitudes of coworkers and supervisors from one class, race, or gender are perceived and acted upon by women of different backgrounds in analyses of job entries, job exits, and occupational mobility, “the character of these social relations reinforces or challenges labor market stratification along class, race, and gender lines” (39). In addition, she looked at the objective and subjective meanings of occupational mobility for Chicana and Mexicana women. She argues that jobs characterized in labor research as dead-end, low paying, and without prestige may be viewed by Chicana and Mexicana women as decent or “better” jobs in relation to jobs held by members of their reference groups or, most important, their own occupational expectations.

Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that social locations include a person's belonging to a particular gender, race, class, nation, age group, kinship group, or certain profession, which, at each historical moment, "have particular implications vis-à-vis the grids of power relations in society" (199). An intersectional approach is crucial because social locations are almost never constructed along one axis of difference, despite the way most official statistics and identity politics tend to construct them (Yuval-Davis 2006). A nuanced understanding of how social location differs for individuals but is directly related to power relations is important to this study because of the unique situation of San Joaquin Valley and because women farmworkers have historically dealt with multiple axes of inequality along which their social locations vary. In addition to race, class, and gender, and age, my research findings highlight the role of inequalities based on immigration status and levels of cultural assimilation and the relative distance between workers' place of residence and jobs as important factors to understand the lived experiences of Chicana and Mexicana women in this community. Below, I review more fully the scholarly literature on these latter types of inequalities.

Citizenship and Inequality

Citizenship status is an important axis of inequality among Chicana farmworkers. For example, Mohanty (1991) argues that women's lives are shaped by immigration, nationality, and citizenship along with race, class and gender. Often, citizenship and immigration policies reflect economic interest. These policies are also informed by racism, sexism, and heterosexism, as particular groups are singled out and excluded in citizenship legislation. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997a) argues that legal status is a fluid

category because a person may experience various legal statuses over a lifetime. New immigrants to the U.S., for example, may begin their stays with undocumented legal status, but may over the course of time gain access to some form of temporary or permanent legal status, and perhaps eventually to naturalized citizenship. She argues that three critical factors distinguish undocumented immigrant and refugees from citizens and immigrant with legal status: an outlawed presence, the criminalization of employment, and exclusion from social entitlements (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997a).

The status of “illegal” for undocumented immigrant workers translates to added vulnerability in the workplace. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997a) argues that this is a feature that enhances their attractiveness to employers in competitive firms in many industries. She situates the experiences in the context of large-scale political and economic transformations in the U.S. and Mexico that are constantly transforming the market for labor needs and opportunities, but argues that the effects on immigrants’ lives are “mediated by the micro-structural context of family and community” (124). In this way, global processes are responsible for setting parameters and processes for immigration, but individual lives are “situated and animated within families, social networks, specific communities, and local economies” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997a:124).

Gleeson and Gonzalez (2012) also discuss the concept of illegality in their analysis of how various institutions shape what it means to be undocumented. They argue that the construction of migrant illegality “by law serves to create and sustain cheap workers through the reproduction of physical borders in everyday life and through the possibility of deportation. Over time, undocumented migrant labor has been criminalized

as “illegal” and subjected to excessive and extraordinary forms of policing” (3). They discuss the idea of the “reproducing physical borders in everyday life”, a concept that is in many of the women farmworkers’ lives. As De Genova (2002) persuasively argues, the construction of illegality is not made to exclude undocumented workers from the workforce. Instead, it is to include them “under a condition of enforced and protracted vulnerability” (423). The construction of “illegality” comes into play both from outside forces in terms of the fear of deportation, as well as challenges with trying to secure a job, being vulnerable to bad workplace conditions, and from intraethnic othering by coworkers.

Gomberg-Muñoz (2010) explores how Mexican immigrants cultivate a social identity as “hard workers” to promote their labor and bolster their dignity and self-esteem. She argues that the conception of Mexican immigrants as a laboring class has a long history in the United States, and that this perception persists. She argues that there is a popular notion that there is something inherent about Mexican *culture* that identifies the work ethic as an essential and integral component of Mexican society. This culturally deterministic notion, however, does not address the diversity among Mexican laborers, ignores the role of inequality in structuring labor conditions, and eliminates workers’ agency (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010). As she points out, this idea ignores the historical subordination of Mexican workers in the United States throughout which many workers have been concentrated in low-wage jobs with little to no job security and employment that is contingent on the degree of “hard work” that a worker puts forth. As she poignantly states, “The notion that a ‘Mexican work ethic’ is an integral part of ‘Mexican

culture' essentializes Mexican immigrant workers, naturalizing their historical subordination and reducing their work performances to a putative cultural inclination of socially degraded, back-breaking labor" (298).

Intraethnic Othering

Although the focus on citizenship is crucial in having a more complex understanding of the experience that many women have with multiple axes of oppression, it is important not to essentialize those experiences, even within groups. Pyke and Dang (2003) contend that the majority of research on racism's effects on the oppressed has focused on overt manifestations, like violence and discrimination. Far less attention has been given to the subtle processes by which racial inequality shapes the way the oppressed think of themselves and other members of their group. They use the term "intraethnic othering" to describe the specific othering processes that occur among coethnics in subordinated groups. They describe the ways in which intraethnic othering often involves the ridicule and isolation of some coethnics-usually the more ethnically-identified, by other coethnics, usually the more assimilated can generate resentment and resistance within the ethnic group.

In this model, they argue that internalized racial oppression is a reaction to the forces of racism, not a source of racism, "Internalized oppression does not define into existence a group of exploitable others. Rather, it is an adaptive response" (Pyke and Dang 1993:151). Anzaldúa (1993) describes a process that takes the opposite form. She describes the testing of "authenticity" in which ethnic traditionalists resist the intraethnic othering of the more assimilated by engaging in another form of othering that ridicules

those who are not ethnic. This creates the dichotomy of those who are “one of us” and those who have “sold out” (Anzaldúa 1993). My research highlights the ways in which both of these processes operate with women farmworkers.

In a discussion of the binary models of resistance and complicity towards racism by people of color, Pyke (2010) argues that a method that concurrently analyzes resistance and complicity across multiple, intersecting forms of oppression is needed. Such a method would allow us to consider how actions resisting one form of domination (e.g., gender) can comply with and reproduce oppression along another dimension (e.g., race). Pyke (2010) adapts Matsuda’s (1996) method of “asking the other question” to analyze the interconnection of oppression in the matrix of power relations. Upon noting racism, Masuda asks: Where is the sexism in this racism? Or where is the classism in this racism? Similarly, when observing sexism, the “other question might be: Where is the racism in this sexism? (Matsuda 1996:64). Pyke (2010) adapts this method to the study of resistance and internalized racism by asking, “where is the internalized racism in this act of resistance? Where is the resistance in this case of internalized racism?” (Pyke 2010:565). She argues that this analytic method requires us to consider the simultaneity of resistance and complicity and creates the opportunity to do so across many forms of oppression.

The critical race and gender discussions in the aforementioned scholarship reflect the tremendous complexity in understanding experiences of women at the intersections of oppression. These experiences illuminate the multiple layers of varying meanings of race, gender, class, citizenship, and immigration status.

Perez Huber (2010), borrowing from the concept of internalized racism, argues that internalized racist nativism can be understood as “the conscious or unconscious acceptance of a racist nativist hierarchy, where perceived white superiority ascribes whites as natives to the US based on real or imagined differences” (91). She argues that internalized racist nativism affects all Latinxs regardless of status because of the rampant essentializing of Latinxs as a monolithic group. Internalized racist nativism, she argues, is a dangerous and divisive tool to “unconsciously perpetuate negative constructions of Latinas/os, which reinforce larger structures of power that use these constructions to justify oppression” (Perez Huber 2010: 92). Understanding this important and complex nexus of race, class, gender, and immigration status that is omnipresent in constructions of Latinx identity is important in dismantling negative perceptions of this group that translate into misinformation and/or continued discrimination.

Spatial Mismatch Theory and Perspectives from Critical Feminist Geography

The reproduction of inequalities is a complex process that has spatial dynamics. Many critical scholars have argued that geography and spatial dynamics are intertwined with the creation and reproduction of inequalities. Social isolation in poor or minority neighborhoods in the US has been linked to labor-market insulation and increased reliance on local contacts, while feminist scholars have shown that women’s social ties also tend to be more locally proximate (Gilbert 1998, Joassart-Marcelli 2009). Immigrants to the US, especially recent arrivals and low-income earners, are likely as well to have geographically reduced social circles (Zavella 1987). Along a similar line, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997b) describes how feminist geographers have focused on how

gendered orientations to space influence the way women organize their daily work lives; women tend to take jobs close to home so that they can fulfill child rearing and domestic duties.

Joassart-Marcelli (2009) argues that, along with individual characteristics, socio-spatial forces shape employment opportunities and incomes of recent Latina immigrants to U.S. within metropolitan areas. In her analysis of the “spatial mismatch” theory that refers to the geographical barriers between home and work that have negative effects on the employment and wages, she argues that one of the key limitations of this concept is the narrow conceptualization of distance as *physical*. Instead, she calls for an expansion of this idea to examine the ways in which distance is not only experienced spatially, but also social and socially constructed. She cites the social distance stemming from gender and ethnic occupational segmentation that limits the job options for women, in particular women of color, as well as distance applied to social networks that provide connections to jobs through referrals or shared information. Additionally, she suggests that a hierarchical gender system could enforce the idea that home or places close to home are more appropriate for women. “These forces-occupational segmentation, social networks, and gender hierarchy-contribute to increasing social distance between individuals and jobs and, along with actual physical distance, result in broadly defined spatial mismatch between places of residence and employment opportunities” (Joassart-Marcelli 2009:36).

The theory of spatial mismatch is important in understanding labor market inequalities, but Ong and Miller (2005) consider access to automobiles, something that is missing in much of the spatial mismatch literature. They argue that most researchers

measure only the number of jobs within a reasonable distance and disregard differences in the levels of transportation access. This is relevant to my research because as the number of jobs has declined, many women have to travel further to get to their job sites. Without reliable personal transportation, many women need money to pay for a daily ride or rely upon their personal networks to get a ride to work. If they are working mothers, they also need to secure transportation to obtain appropriate childcare as well. In addition, much of the spatial mismatch literature focuses on urban spaces, but the challenges in a rural community are very different due to the lack of *any* public transportation and the physical distance between towns. My research adds to this body of work by focusing on rural communities where social isolation is potentially higher than that in the cities and where the scarcity of jobs has forced women to look for work further away from home. In addition, these various types of inequalities create differences in the strength and types of social networks women have access to which depends on their social location.

BACKGROUND

Stretching from Bakersfield to Sacramento, the San Joaquin Valley includes the eight county southernmost area of the California's Central Valley and is home to a \$35 billion agricultural industry. Despite the booming agricultural industry, this region is also home to some of the most impoverished communities in the nation. The Fresno metropolitan area ranked as the second most impoverished region in the state (U.S. Census 2015). A 2010 study found the San Joaquin Valley's 20th congressional district ranked the lowest in the nation on resident well-being, based on an assessment of health,

education, and income (Social Science Research Council 2010). Among the poorest of these residents are the farmworkers employed in California agriculture each year who have been at the helm of navigating one of the state's worst natural disasters in history.

The historic drought has brought with it the hottest and driest years on record (US Drought Monitor 2016) as well as record job losses in the agricultural sector. Although the state has received sufficient rainfall and snowpack to alleviate the drought in 2016-2017, 2015 was not only the final year of the historic drought, but it was the worst year of the drought as well. With nearly 20,000 farm-related job losses, 8,000 of them directly related to farms, an increase of 33% of cropland fallowing compared with 2014 and 67% (or 1 million acre-feet) more groundwater pumping than in 2014 (Howitt et al. 2015), the drought's last year was catastrophic for the state in general and for farmworkers in particular.

Despite these challenges, farmworkers remain an invisible population in much of the sociological literature, media coverage, and popular discourse. There has been considerable attention to the economic impact of the drought and the political battles waged over policy responses to it, but this has come at the expense of understanding the challenges that farmworkers face. In addition, discussion about the experiences of farmworkers tends to focus on men, leaving women farmworkers doubly silenced. Although farmworkers are not a monolithic group, my research has uncovered common themes that these communities and families face. By centering my work on one of the most marginalized populations, my research has uncovered a complex web of challenges that the drought created and exacerbated.

In this paper, I use in-depth interviews to examine the inequalities among Latina farmworkers that manifest themselves in their working conditions and job climates. My informants highlighted the significance of inequalities based on age, gender, citizenship, place of residence, social networks, and length of time in the community. The majority of farmworking women in this region are employed in the fields and the packinghouses where *mayordomas/os* play important roles in influencing the hiring, firing, and supervision of the workers by making suggestions to a higher-level manager or farm owner. These supervisors play the role of the “middle[wo]man minority” between the employer (elites) and employees (the masses) (Bonacich 1973). Bonacich (1973) argues that members of ethnic minorities who serve as “middle[wo]men” serve a number of functions, “Since they are not involved in the status hang-ups of the surrounding society, they are free to deal with anyone. In contrast, elites may feel that they lose status dealing with the ‘masses.’ Also, they act as buffer for elites, bearing the brunt of mass hostility because they deal directly with the latter. In a word, middle-person minorities plug the status gap between elites and masses, acting as middle[wo]men between the two” (584). The role of these supervisors is important because they are often given discretion over hiring and firing in the packinghouses (where women are the majority) and the fields (where men are the majority). In the packinghouse, the *mayordoma* position is seen as an intermediate rather than the low-status position of the line workers. Each of these facets of farm labor are often lost in popular discourse about the experience of farmworkers, but they will be explored in this paper to provide a nuanced understanding of the lives of the women farmworkers.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 women agricultural workers who worked either in the fields and/or the packinghouses in California's San Joaquin Valley. My interview guide is provided in Appendix 1. Interviews covered topics ranging from their personal experiences of their work in the fields and packinghouses, effects of the drought, coping strategies, questions about their families, and the role of social support networks.

Of the 20 interviews, 9 were conducted in-person and 11 over the phone. The phone interviews were conducted to mitigate the challenges with distance as well as to accommodate the working schedules of some of the respondents. The in-person interviews were conducted in the communities of the interviewees, either at their homes or at an agreed-upon location chosen by the interviewees. Seven (n=7) of the interviews were conducted in English and 13 (n=13) were conducted in Spanish. The interviews were semi-structured, audio recorded, and transcribed. Interviews conducted in Spanish were initially transcribed in Spanish and then translated to English.

Respondents ranged in age from 21-75 years old with an average of 45 years. Respondents were either U.S. born (n=6), were naturalized citizens (n=8), or were undocumented (n=6). My sample included 14 women with children, (n=6) had school age children (0-18 years old), (n=9) with adult children (18 years of age or older). Of the 20 participants, (n=12) worked only in the packinghouses, (n=1) in the fields only, and (n=8) worked in both the fields and the packinghouses. 10 of the women are married, 7 are single, and 3 are divorced.

Data were collected between December 2016 and March 2017 using a snowball sample located through my personal networks in the Fresno County region of the Valley who provided the names of other potential interviewees. I recruited informants through personal invitations over the phone, in person, and through personal introductions made by my personal friends and family members. This approach was most appropriate due to the geographic isolation of my sample population, as well as the need to gain workers' trust and confidentiality arising from the painful experiences with the drought, fear of employer retaliation for expressing criticisms about their jobs, and concerns about privacy, especially among undocumented immigrants who might fear disclosure of their legal status. To minimize the risk posed by revealing their immigration status, the interviewees are identified only by pseudonyms.

This study is based on a modified grounded theory method. Traditional grounded theory assumes that researchers should not define the areas of research interest and theoretical importance before the data collection process (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Instead, analysis of the data is inductive and responsive to the themes that respondents suggest are important to them. Grounded theory starts with individual cases or experiences and develops progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize and summarize patterns in the findings and to understand their meaning (Charmaz 2004). Although my method heavily derived from this theoretical foundation, my interview questions and analysis were informed by assumptions within intersectional feminist theory. I thus combined aspects of both deductive and inductive analytical strategies.

To code the interviews, I went through an initial line by line coding process where I examined common themes from an initial sample of interviews. I developed the following preliminary codes for these themes: adverse effects on their jobs, reliance on networks for material support and job referrals, and inequalities in the impacts of the jobs depending on their personal and social background characteristics. I then employed a focused coding technique whereby I used my preliminary codes to direct my analysis of the interview data. By employing this method, the theme of inequality among the women emerged as one of the most salient themes from my interview data. During the initial interviews, my questions were heavy on the role of social support networks, but the underlying theme of inequality among farmworking women led me to refocus my questions to have a better understanding of the ways in which various identities and social locations of the women impacted the way they navigated the drought and its impacts.

Having been born and raised in the San Joaquin Valley gave me certain amount of insider status that made my data collection process run more smoothly. I come from a family of Mexican *campesinos*, farmworkers, and I worked in the packinghouses as a young person every summer to earn money for school. With this background, I began my project with experiential knowledge of the conditions and inequalities that exist in those spaces. Many of the informants in my study were referred by close friends and family, which provided a certain amount of foundational trust.

However, I also embody many aspects of being an outsider researcher. Having left the Valley after high school to attend university, my upbringing did not change the

fact that I have not lived in the Valley for many years. In addition, my education was both an obstacle and a source of pride for many of the women. Some of the women were mistrustful of me initially because of the negative experiences they have had with educational institutions (especially as it relates to their children) and were not sure of why I wanted to speak with them or what I was planning on doing with the information. For other women, particularly the older women, they expressed how proud they were of me, that one of “*nuestras hijas*, our daughters” was so successful in their education. The geographic distance made it challenging for me to spend time with my informants, and half of them were done over the phone. This made it difficult to build the same type of rapport compared with me having spent more considerable time with the informants. However, many of my informants were referred to me by my personal networks of friends and family; this entrée gave me more trust and legitimacy during my interviews.

The insider/outsider researcher debate has argued that minority researchers have certain empirical and methodological advantages in conducting field research on racial minorities (Romano 1973, Baca Zinn 1979). This includes the “lenses” through which they see social reality that could potentially allow scholars of color to ask questions and gather information outside scholars could not (Baca Zinn 1979). As Mirandé (1985) suggests, issues surrounding the representations of Chicanos is not about individuals, but one of institutions and ideas, “The issue is not between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ as we have often been told, but between traditional dominant societal perspectives and emergent minority world views...the pattern is so pervasive that minority scholars have

often become engulfed by it, pressured to adopt prevailing perspectives and to reject, directly or indirectly, their cultural heritage” (204).

I present the emergent themes in three main sections. The first focuses on the various working conditions and workplace inequalities among the women farmworkers. This section provides an overview of the working conditions in both the fields and the packinghouses, and inequalities based on citizenship, gender, age, and geography. Next, I present data on social networks and how they relate to inequalities among these workers. The declining number of jobs due to the drought has made social networks more crucial than ever to securing a job. My informants claim that the length of time you live in a community, your reputation as being a “good” worker, and English language proficiency can all help mitigate a lack of strong social networks. The last section focuses on the various forms of discrimination and favoritism that women farmworkers observed or experienced. Here, I discuss the role of the *mayordomo/as* in hiring and firing as well as the challenges of securing certain types of jobs as a woman.

FINDINGS

My interviews provide a complex picture of commonalities and differences in the ways Chicana farmworkers have been impacted by the drought. Much of the variation stemmed from the women’s different social locations, particularly in terms of their citizenship status and age. These inequalities, however, are not static and can be mitigated by other factors, including the quality and number of one’s own network connections, which play a major role in determining the occupation one enters. Although social capital research is abundant in social science literature, this research links the role

of social capital in employment outcomes to the social and structural inequalities faced by women farmworkers that are exacerbated by the historic drought.

Women farmworkers are not a monolithic group but their families face common challenges in the San Joaquin Valley. The drought remains the backbone of the conversations that I had with the women who participated in my research project and it has affected their employment situations, their lifestyles, strengthened as well as weakened their communities, and created a space for resentments to build and boil over. Below, I focus on the themes that were the most salient in my interviews: working conditions and workplace inequalities, including the various types of farm labor, citizenship status, gender, age, and geographical distances. The second section focuses on the role of social support networks, and the third focuses on workplace discrimination and favoritism.

Working Conditions and Workplace Inequalities

Although all of the women in my sample included Mexican and/or Chicana women who are employed in farm labor, there are inequalities among the women that manifested themselves in various ways. Speaking to Zavella's (1991) call to maintain an analytical perspective that centers women's social location, this section looks at the inequalities based on types of jobs, age, immigration status, and place of residence. In addition, my sample included women who worked in various types of jobs *within* farm labor, including packinghouses, where the fruit is packed, and the fields where the fruit is picked. The women provided the following information on the working conditions of the fields and the packinghouses.

Work in the fields.

While work in the fields is male-dominated, my informants claim that about 1/3 of field workers are women. Work in the fields is seen as more labor-intensive and physically strenuous. It takes place outdoors in triple digit heat during the summer months and freezing cold during the winter months. The hiring is done by male *mayordomos* or foremen, which is typically a worker who supervises and directs other workers. On the other hand, at least half of the women described the fields as being a space with “more freedom.” Many women preferred to work in the fields, despite the sun, because you talk to your coworkers with less surveillance by supervisors than in the packinghouses. Many of the women described their relationships with coworkers as stronger with other women they met in the fields compared to packinghouses. Faviola, 25, explains why she prefers field work, “You’re working hard and fast, but at least you have some interaction with people and fresh air, not the loud machines of the packinghouse. In the packinghouse, they don’t let you talk to each other or chew gum. They’re constantly breathing down your neck. You can only talk to other people during your lunch break.”

Work in the packinghouses.

Work in the packinghouses is seen as less physically demanding (though still described as “back-breaking” by some of the women) and is typically dominated by women. The packinghouses vary by size, a characteristic that has implications for the work environment, including work hour flexibility, resiliency to weather-related changes, and overall work climate (including community-building opportunities). In general, the

packinghouses are less social than the fields while on the clock, but many of the women described their lunch and dinner breaks as the best part of their days because of the convivial atmosphere.

Small packinghouses tend to be family-run and have much smaller workforces. Typically there is only one shift (though that shift can sometimes run 12 hours depending on the amount of fruit to pack for the day). Many of the women described smaller packinghouses as having more of a “family” environment, including much more interaction with the owners. “I think that they [the owners] know that without us, they don’t eat,” said Faviola, 25. Smaller packinghouses have also been more susceptible to negative impacts of the drought because the owners of the packinghouse usually own the fields that provide their produce. Many have had to fallow fields, switch to less water-intensive crops, or have had to dig new wells once their water allocation was sharply cut by the Governor’s State of Emergency declaration and their wells that had their last reserves of groundwater have gone dry.

Larger packinghouses tend to be corporate-owned or contracted by owners of various fields. They tend to pack a wide variety of produce. These larger packinghouses typically have multiple shifts, including graveyard shifts, and work hours tend to be less flexible than in smaller packinghouses, and without as much overtime. Despite the lack of overtime possibilities in larger packinghouses, the work tends to be steadier.

In the packinghouses, regardless of the size, the *mayordomas* are promoted by the owners from the “line workers” to oversee the process and supervise the women workers. In my sample, mayordomas were typically an older (45+) Mexicana with lots of

experience in the packinghouses and/or fields. Depending on the packinghouse, these mayordomas often have discretion over hiring and firing.³

Lala, a 61-year-old mayordoma explained her role as a “middle-woman” at the packinghouse: “A lot of the girls think I’m mean or too strict, but I don’t do anything the owners don’t tell me to do. I don’t care when they [the workers] complain because the owners know that I’m just doing what they say.” Some of the workers in Lala’s packinghouse described several incidents they had with her that ended up with them crying. “She could be so mean to us. She yells at us all the time and is always telling us that we’re packing too slow even if we are going fast,” says Tere, 65. For the mayordomas, they described the stressful position they are in in regards to hiring, firing, and meeting the bosses’ expectations. On the other hand, the drought did not affect them financially. As one put it, “We get paid the same no matter how much fruit there is. When some of the girls found that out, they were mad, but that’s just how it is.” Although I only interviewed four mayordomas, all of the women described the mayordomas as having a very important role in terms of hiring, firing, and shaping the job climate and work conditions.

Immigration Status and Gender.

Although women farmworkers commonly faced gender discrimination, undocumented immigrants faced discrimination based on their gender *and* immigration status. In many cases, respondents’ own immigration status shaped their responses to questions about the experiences of undocumented women. A person’s immigration status

³ Although there are men who work in the packinghouses, they tend to drive the forklifts or stack the pallets of produce to be shipped. These men are under the supervision of a male *mayordomo*.

shaped how other workers treated them and their employability. Most of the informants described that since the number of jobs have declined because of the drought, that many of the male mayordomos in the fields were less likely to hire women because of their perceived lack of physical strength. In the packinghouses, where women dominate, many of the respondents described a stricter work environment with higher levels of scrutiny of social security numbers. “It’s harder now. They say that they’re checking the socials a lot more now. Maybe it’s just certain packinghouses, but it’s hard to know which ones. In the fields though, they don’t really check anything. If they did, they wouldn’t have any workers,” says Mayra, 32. This speaks to the multiple layers of discrimination that farmworking women face: they are less likely to get hired in the fields because of their gender, and they are less likely to get hired in the packinghouses because of their immigration status.

Every undocumented woman I interviewed acknowledged increased challenges with their documentation status (or perceived documentation status) in recent years. Many of the women described the “othering” of undocumented immigrants that existed before the drought. All six undocumented respondents said that the anti-immigrant sentiment had worsened recently. As jobs dwindled during the drought and anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican rhetoric became more prevalent during the Presidential candidacy and election of Donald Trump, the work environment for undocumented women became even more hostile.

Chavela, a 36-year-old undocumented mother of three arrived in the United States four years ago. She described the first packinghouse she worked at as a very hostile

place, which she attributed to the large size of the packinghouse and the highly competitive nature that existed at all levels:

In large packinghouses, people make you feel inferior to them. Its more competitive and there's more bullying. In a small packinghouse, there are less workers and we feel more united. There's not as much gossiping. When I first started at a big packinghouse, I heard the other women referring to me as "la mojada" (the wetback), so I did struggle a little bit.

This experience provides an example of "intraethnic othering" (Pyke 2003), a process by which racial inequality shapes the way the oppressed think of themselves and other members of their group. "By accepting and internalizing mainstream racist values and rationales, subordinates, often without a conscious awareness of doing so, justify the oppression of their group with a belief in their own inferiority" (Pyke 2003: 152). In addition to the prejudice that workers faced from their coworkers, many of the respondents described a general fear and uncertainty that exists for undocumented immigrants. Teresa, 65, who was able to get her permanent residency less than ten years ago says, "It was difficult, so difficult. Sometimes we used other people's names, sometimes for just a week to make enough money to eat."

Many of the participants felt that packinghouses have become much more stringent in recent years in terms of verifying social security numbers of their employees, increasing the challenges for undocumented workers to find work. Bianca, 27, believes that part of this trend is in part due to the "changing mindset towards undocumented people." Although she is not undocumented, she describes the situation faced by her undocumented coworkers who "shy away from anybody that's an authority figure." As she describes:

They [employers and supervisors] just pounce on that, like, “We can do whatever we want with you and we’re gonna use you for doing the dirty work. Then we can get rid of you and we won’t think twice about it.” I feel bad for most of these girls because they bust their ass at anything that they’re told to do and they don’t [get] rewarded for it. Their reward is a pink slip.

The reduction in the number of jobs since the drought have created a much more competitive work environment that has exacerbated tensions between undocumented immigrants and workers that are native-born or naturalized citizens. As Diana, 28 explains,

Before, packing houses, farm laborers, they were all migrant, Mexican workers for the most part. Even if they didn’t like them, most of the other racial groups looked at them like, eh, whatever. Now that those people, the ones that were supposedly too good for these cheap jobs, now that they need these cheap jobs, all of a sudden the undocumented becomes “illegal.” They’re looked down upon with hate. It wasn’t always like they had the best relationship with everyone else, but before it wasn’t like they were looked at as the enemy, and now, that’s how it is to a lot of people.

In contrast, about half of the women (all of whom were citizens or permanent residents) argued that undocumented people have an advantage in terms of obtaining welfare and other government benefits. They cited the fact that since the undocumented often worked under other peoples’ social security numbers, it is unreported income, leaving them eligible for more government benefits if they have children born in the United States who are minors. Of the three *mayordomas* that I interviewed, they were split on their personal political sentiments towards undocumented immigrants, but they each agreed that undocumented women had it easier than legal citizens or immigrants. Rocio, 62 said that her boss would notice that the same worker came back the next season with a different social security number, “So I’ll go ask and they tell me that they’re using a different

number because they made too much on the number they used last year so they reduced their food stamps. They say, ‘another girl told me to use a different number so I can get my aid back.’ For the legal people, we cannot do this. I don’t have anything against them because they’re human beings, but there’s abuse.”

Lala, 61 said that she preferred to hire undocumented women because “they complain less.” She elaborated:

The girls that have papers they start, “Hey, *ya es la hora de la quebrada*.” [It is time for our break already.] Why are you not giving us our break? (yelling and screaming). They make me mad. But people that don’t have any papers, they don’t complain as long as they have their job. They are very, very hard working people. I worked my entire life with illegal people and I work more comfortably with illegal people than with my own family and those that have papers.

Lala’s discussion of the work ethic of undocumented people speaks to the construction of illegality and the narrative of Mexicans’ innate work ethic due to their culture. In this case, all of the women are Mexican, but she essentialized undocumented workers as working harder than documented workers based on her experience that they are less likely to “complain.” This speaks to Gomberg-Muñoz’s (2010) discussion of how low-wage employers essentialize Mexican workers, but in this case, this is done by a fellow Mexicana, albeit from a different social location.

A person’s documentation status is not always known. Some of the respondents said that women used to be more likely to reveal their legal status but seem much more reserved now. In addition, there has been more overt “othering” that has caused people to feel like they should not disclose their immigration status. Faviola, 25 says that,

After Trump, I’ve heard some ladies say, ‘well, I’m ok because I’m legal.’ They make the other ones feel less than them. They’ll stay quiet; they’re

not going to say 'oh I'm not legal.' I think that just because you're legal in this country doesn't mean they're less than you. For me, people are people. Even if you don't have papers, we're all equal. But I've seen some of the girls do that.

Many of the women described increased discussion about immigration policies and fear of deportation:

People are scared. Most of them have little kids and there's so much fear of deportation. That's the fear that a lot of people have. What will happen to their kids? If they go back to Mexico they don't have nothing over there. Its not the same wage as here. People are really scared about this.

Mari says that sometimes you can tell who has "papers" by noticing who is more likely to assert their rights. She said that she has seen women complain to the bosses that undocumented women are taking their jobs and that it is not fair that they get to keep their jobs because they do not complain about their working conditions. She says that their silence "comes from necessity. They need their jobs, even when they are abused."

While the challenges with being undocumented are recognizable, the strength of workers' personal networks can sometimes help women overcome that status. "I have seen that even if you're undocumented, if you have family in there they can hook you up with a social security number so you can work. I have seen it happen a lot," says Faviola, 25. She continued, "they'll say, if you don't have papers don't worry, I'll talk to her [the mayordoma]. And they will fix everything." This runs counter to Granovetter's (1973) theory of "the strength of weak ties," which argues that relationships with weaker ties (acquaintances, friends of friends) tend to provide access to new information that can result in upward mobility.

Ageism.

My sample included women with a wide range of ages. Both the youngest and oldest women described a pattern of age discrimination against women farmworkers. Both of these groups argued that the scarcity of jobs has put them at a disadvantage. Younger women are perceived to lack work experience while older women are perceived to be physically frail. Rachel, 27 believed that she had been discriminated against when she was younger and has seen it happen in the ten years she's worked in the packinghouse:

You're at a massive disadvantage if you're a younger person. If you're still in school, you have no prior work experience, and you aren't educated enough to get these higher up positions. Even a menial job, a part-time, whatever job, the younger you are, it's next to impossible to get those jobs. It's an uphill battle; the younger you are, the harder it is. Unless you know somebody who knows somebody, it's really difficult for a younger person to get a job.

Diana, 21 says that she has applied for jobs that have gone to the more experienced women:

I've had times when they don't even know how I work yet and they just judge me for being younger and they chose the older lady. But there's been times where I've surprised them and I've beat the more experienced girls. They're like, "Oh crap, you've been here before huh?" I tell them, "Nah, I've never been here." They'll tell me that I'm doing really good. So I've been through both, I've been misjudged and I've also shown them that I can work.

Alma, a 61-year-old mayordoma believes that younger people have been most affected by the drought because of their lack of experience. "I'm getting old and I'm going to retire in a few years. But the young people, the young couples that depend on the packinghouses. It affects them more. Especially young people who don't go to school."

The oldest women also described the challenges they faced because of their age. Valentina, a 70-year-old undocumented woman said she had worked at the same packinghouse every summer for 15 years until she hurt her foot on the job two years ago. With no car and living in an isolated and unincorporated area, it was hard for her to get to work. After her foot healed, she went to speak with the supervisor who said they were not hiring any more women:

I couldn't believe it. I gave my entire body to that job and they would not give me any work. I am still mad about it because my neighbor who is young went after me and they hired her on the spot. They discriminated against me and there's nothing I can do about it.

For the youngest women who have the least amount of experience, and for the oldest women who are seen as a liability, age is a factor that has posed real challenges. "It's always been like that," says Dalia 52, "but since the drought, the old and the young can't get jobs as fast anymore. Its messed up but I can see why they don't want to hire them. It's people in the middle who work the fastest and that's what the bosses want." Although ageism was a reality before the drought, with the drought it has worsened. In the context of the drought, available workers far outnumber the job openings and those making employment decisions have greater opportunities to discriminate among the workers based on their age.

Geographical disadvantages.

Many jobs are concentrated in the eastern part of Fresno County, putting residents in the western part of the county at a disadvantage in finding employment. While eastern Fresno County, situated closer to the Sierra Nevadas, allows more access to the water from the melted snowpack every spring, the western part of the county was hit harder by

the drought because of its distance from the Valley's largest source of water. Jenny, 28 says of the western part of the county:

You go over there; it's a dust bowl. There's nothing. The canals have maybe a foot of water; farmers are ripping out their crops. There are towns that are literally out of water. This is ten minutes away, once I cross Highway 99, it's like night and day. A lot of people around here look at it like, "man it's getting rough, I'm only working 5 days a week." Well, there's places over there where they're lucky if they work five days a month. There's no water, no jobs, and really, no hope.

Diana, 21, a resident of the eastern part of the county echoed the sentiment, but also points to the challenges of living in a small rural community, "If you live in a small town, your town probably doesn't have a packinghouse or all these stores where you can apply to work. So in a smaller town you *have* to work in the fields. You have to. So I think the smaller the town, the more impacted it is. Living in Avenal, I feel isolated from the world."

Transportation is one area that has become critical, as many farmworkers need to drive further distances to get to work as work has become scarcer in the drought. If they do not have a car, do not drive, or have to share a single car for the household, many women pay for daily rides from coworkers (which helps their coworkers afford the gas). The prices range from \$5-7 a day, an expense that has proven to be prohibitive when the distances are further and the hours are cut. In particular, women on the western part of Fresno County, an area that has been hit particularly hard by the drought describe the burdens placed on their families, as they often have to travel an hour each way for work. Ana, 32, says, "I often tell my husband to teach me how to drive, especially since my kids are growing up and they'll be going to different schools." She also described the

support she received from one of her coworkers from whom she got a ride to and from work each day:

When our hours were very minimal, she told me that I didn't have to pay her for the rides for that month. She charges 5 dollars a day. She told me not to pay her because the other women don't have young kids and don't pay for babysitting. Since I do, she gave me a break. She told me to give that money to the babysitter instead. For me, that is some real support. My other coworkers will often give me things for my kids too, like clothes that their kids have outgrown. My friend that I get a ride from, for me, she's an angel from heaven. It's special for a woman who barely knows you to help you out so much.

The challenges with transportation coupled with the scarcity of jobs due to the drought is a challenge that many women have to deal with, particularly if they are mothers who have to arrange childcare. One way that women mitigate these challenges includes reliance on their social networks, much like Ana describes above.

Social Networks

As the number of available jobs has declined, the competition for jobs has increased. All of the respondents described either having been directly or indirectly impacted by the drought. Although not every woman had lost work because of the drought, 17 out of 20 respondents said that they had experienced either job layoffs or diminished work hours. The majority of them also discussed the importance of social networks for finding jobs as being more important than ever. In particular, referrals from close friends and family are crucial to obtaining jobs. My interviews with the *mayordomas*, supervisors who play a crucial role in hiring, as well as packinghouse and field workers, reveal the importance of employment networks to obtaining work, especially during the drought.

Rocio, a 62-year-old *mayordoma* has worked in packinghouses since she was 20 years old. She explained that personal networks and referrals are the single most important factor in hiring decisions. As she explains, “Let’s say at the packinghouse, for example, since I’m the one that hires. For my friends or people that I know, I tell them, ‘If you know somebody that needs a job, tell them that I have a job for them. If they come apply then for sure I’m willing to give them a job.’” When asked whether she would hire someone that was not referred, she said that they would have to have an interview and that “they have a much better chance if they have a referral or if they come in from another packinghouse where I know people from there. It’s much better chances for them to get the job.” Lala, a 61-year-old *mayordoma* echoed the sentiment, “you have a much better chance of getting hired if you know someone who works here. Or if you’ve worked at a packinghouse before and that *mayordoma* has good things to say about you. Especially since the drought, we want to make sure we have good workers.” Thus supervisors often rely heavily on their own personal networks both to recruit workers and to assess job applicants’ qualifications and work ethic, rather than relying on formal tests or credentials. Personal friends or family members are considered more trustworthy sources of work referrals than other employers who they may not know. This dynamic works to the disadvantage of new residents and those with no personal connections with supervisors.

Jenny, a 28-year-old farmworker explained that the drought has created a situation where even if you do know someone, the limited positions available have made employment networks less influential in terms of obtaining work. She described that

many of the people that could have helped her to secure a position in a packinghouse in the past are now looking for jobs themselves or anxious about potential competition from other workers given the scarcity of work,

So now, they need a job. Say they get a job somewhere else because they have more experience than me, it's a lot harder for them to try to help someone else out because if you start putting your neck out for a bunch of people one of these days, someone will mess up and you're gonna get fired. So it's really limited a lot of that. Before it was like, 'Hey I'm gonna try and get you in.' Now, it's 'Ahh, I don't know if I can.' That's what you hear more often than not. The reasons will be things like, 'They laid off three people yesterday,' or, 'the farmer uprooted all the trees on the farm we were working at.' You'll find that more times than anything else.

Length of time in the community was mentioned often as a factor in being able to secure a job. The longer you lived in a community, the more likely it was that you built up employment networks that would serve you in your job search.

Interestingly, these types of networks have the potential to overcome other challenges, such as age and immigration status. In nearly every interview, however, the women described varying amounts of employer discrimination and favoritism.

Discrimination and Favoritism

Although some women preferred work in the fields over packinghouse work because of the higher wages and steadier hours, they also described employer discrimination against women for field jobs. Rocio, 61 believes that men have historically been more likely to get jobs in the fields compared with women because "they sometimes have more experience with more jobs, and they can work in different jobs that women

can't." In addition, she mentioned that jobs that require using a ladder to pick fruit pose a particular disadvantage for women:

A lot of farmers won't let women go up in the *escaleras* (ladders) to pick fruit from trees. It's rare. A lot of farmers are afraid of getting sued if the women get hurt. They don't want to take a risk. They don't want girls. There are very few farmers that let women go up the escaleras. I can say probably like 2-3% of farmers will let women do that work. Guys have a better chance to get more jobs.

Most of the interviewees said that although women have been historically underrepresented in the fields, the drought-related job losses have created a situation that has furthered discrimination against women. Mari, 40 says,

Women don't get the same opportunity that men do. It's bad right now because there's already less and less jobs, so the handful of jobs that they would always be given, they're already filled. And all the other ones, even if they were unisex positions, are all filled by men. It's more and more like that, you see that a lot more. That makes it harder on families, because the wife comes home, and she has to tell her husband and family, "I didn't get this job" and husbands get mad because they're under pressure and they need the extra income to help support the family. All around, it's horrible.

My respondents also claimed that once you have a job, you must go to great lengths to develop a positive relationship with the mayordomas in order to keep their job. Nati, 75, explained that even before the drought, the mayordomas tended to stay on the good side of the bosses. But since the drought, they have become stricter with the workers, apparently in an effort to impress the bosses and keep their own jobs secure. As one woman reported:

They are constantly telling you to hurry and criticizing your work. Even if they see that you are working hard. But there is a lot of favoritism. They won't yell at the girls who bring them gifts, even if they aren't

working as hard as everyone else. I can't bring them anything. I barely have enough for myself, much less bring my boss gifts.

Resentment against those who "kissed up" to the mayordomas was a common sentiment. The different types of jobs a person can secure can vary based on the types of employment networks they have. Working in the fields is often seen as physically harder work compared to work in the packinghouses. It is often seen as the domain of men, but there have always been women who labor alongside them. Packinghouse jobs, though still labor intensive, can be either indoors or at the very least under a shelter. On face value, it may seem as though packinghouse jobs are more coveted, and although the majority of my respondents worked only in the packinghouses and spoke about how lucky they felt to not have to work in the sun, some preferred to be in the fields for various reasons.

Building employment networks is not always easy and some women lack them. For example, Nati, a 75-year-old packinghouse worker says she has worked at the same packinghouses depending on the season since she came to the United States in 1970. She explains that women who have lost their jobs at a certain packinghouse will go to another place if they know people there. She says that she never developed those types of networks, but she has been able to keep her job because of her reputation as a strong worker. She observed that many women her age were unlikely to get hired because employers prefer to hire younger women. She claims: "The only reason they still hire me is because I have a reputation for being a hard worker. I don't go to the restroom every little while or make myself dumb like some of the other girls. I'm there to work."

The majority of the respondents spoke about their personal reputation as a “good worker” as crucial to securing a job. Since the drought began, many of the women described an increase in the level of surveillance of workers by *mayordomas* and other workers in the packinghouses. Mari, 50, says that *mayordomas* are constantly watching, “but the other girls will rat you out too. You have to work hard to keep your job or at the first chance they get, they’ll lay you off.” Mayra, 32, spoke of this increased pressure to work every day as well:

You gotta go everyday! Since it’s so selective, they don’t need someone that misses a day or two. If you miss a day...for every person there’s two or three more people that want to work, they always tell you that at work. That’s why you gotta keep going and keep your job secure. You’re over here scared to miss a day of work. Even if your kid is sick, you wanna miss work to take care of them, but work is really important too. If you don’t go to work, who is gonna support the kid who is sick?

As jobs became scarcer, job competition among workers increased which has had pernicious effects. Maria, 47 also described the pre-drought conditions where there was enough work for everyone, but she says that since the jobs have disappeared, many *mayordomos* have taken advantage of peoples’ desperation to keep their jobs. She says that often they will choose their own friends or family members, people who are perceived to work hard, and workers who will not complain about not getting paid for overtime. “As long as they don’t complain, they’ll keep their jobs.”

Workers’ reputations as a good or bad worker were commonly cited as being an important factor that could potentially overcome discrimination based on age and employers’ reluctance to hire undocumented immigrants. For many of the women, once the season is over for one particular crop, they will apply to work at other packinghouses

that are packing other fruit. Although all of the women stated that the *mayordomas* will first recruit the same women from previous seasons to work, there are opportunities for outsiders to secure a position. Angelia, 34 gave an example of her experience transferring from one packinghouse to another, “The mayordomas communicate with each other. The mayordomas will lay you off at the end of the season so you can start at the other packinghouse. But you have to end it right, you can’t just stop going or they won’t call you back the next season.” She described that “ending it right” entailed giving your current mayordoma notice about your intention to stop work at that location in order to work at another packinghouse. If you have a reputation for being a “good worker,” your mayordoma will do you a favor and lay you off, freeing you to work at another packinghouse.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The experiences of the women in this study demonstrate the pervasiveness of structural inequalities in the lives of Mexicana farmworkers. The historical subjugation of Mexican immigrant laborers, the gender and age discrimination that limits the types of jobs they can get, the ways that citizenship status eliminates job prospects and keeps undocumented immigrants in perpetual fear of deportation are all parts of the experience that many Chicana farmworkers in rural communities live with on a daily basis. The fact that many of these inequalities, endemic within contemporary capitalism, are often perpetuated *within* the community and among Chicana farmworkers speaks to the complex situation that exists.

This research adds to the intersectional feminist literature by providing a framework for understanding the richness and diversity of experience in the lives of Chicana farmworkers. The inequalities that exist among the women do not happen in a vacuum, instead, they are a reflection of larger systemic inequalities that the women face in wider society. The intraethnic othering among the women based on citizenship, age, and geography was encouraged by the increased anti-immigrant rhetoric by the government and the constant threat of deportation. Many of the participants in this study said that they never felt ashamed or afraid to discuss their citizenship status with their coworkers until Donald Trump's presidential campaign and eventual election, which created a climate of fear and intimidation for many undocumented people. More research is needed on how the so-called "Trump effect" affects farm labor as a whole, as at least half of the people who pick and pack our fruits and vegetables are undocumented immigrants. As for now, the immediate impact has included the exacerbation of nativism among the women workers.

As one of the most vulnerable populations, women farmworkers have borne the brunt of much of the drought-related impacts because of the multiple axes of workplace discrimination they face. In particular, undocumented women who are shut out of work in the fields because of their gender and not hired in the packinghouses because of their citizenship status have to deal with an incredible amount of adversity. By expanding the intersectional lens to include their experiences, it is my hope that policymakers, advocates, and labor and community organizations will shift policy discussions to increase support for the most vulnerable populations in our state. Additionally,

understanding farmworkers as a diverse population will help those administering programs and policies to better address the needs of these communities.

The environmental crisis and the harsh political climate for Mexican immigrants have created a challenging situation for many of the women farmworkers who participated in this research. The heavy rains of 2017 marked an end to the State of Emergency imposed by Governor Brown in 2014, signaling a more positive outlook for many farmworkers. Despite this, many of the women remain cautiously optimistic. The length and the intensity of the drought left hundreds of thousands of acres fallowed, which will take years for those crops to produce at pre-drought levels. In addition, the drought prompted many farmers to over-pump groundwater at record rates, leaving many underground water arteries dry. This has created challenges for many people who live in unincorporated communities that rely on wells for their water.

The historic drought created conditions that made it very challenging for many families to survive that deserve more research. Although my focus in this paper was on workplace inequalities, my interviews revealed various household survival strategies that the women described, including having to ask for financial help from family members or having to work in the informal job market in order to survive, including selling food. They also described a more strict work environment during the drought where workers could no longer bring home boxes of fruits or vegetables, a staple that many poor families relied on. In addition, some of the respondents discussed having lost friends because they had to move out of state to be able to provide for their families. More research is needed on the impacts of the drought on household well-being and survival strategies among

farmworkers. Not only would this research help to illuminate the various forms of cooperation that exist among farmworkers, it could help to show where and which kinds of resources are most needed as well as the need for job creation within this region.

Further research also needs to be done to understand the challenges associated with unincorporated communities in the Central Valley. The historical exclusion of many poor immigrants, the displacement of the most disenfranchised, the lack of public services, and now the lack of water have all created a dire situation for people who live in the outskirts of incorporated cities. In addition, the prevalence and impacts of the spatial mismatch between residents and jobs within rural areas is lacking in the spatial mismatch literature, which instead tends to focus on urban labor markets. With the sociopolitical climate as well as the delicate environmental situation, there is much potential for the theory to be expanded to look at the role of geography and public works planning in perpetuating inequality for many residents of the Valley.

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APPENDIX 1

Mujeres Trabajadoras Interview Questionnaire-English

Preliminary Demographic Characteristics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your marital status?
5. Do you have children? How many? What ages?
6. Who lives in your home? Do you provide care for anybody outside of your immediate family? (i.e. parents, other children or family members)
7. In what country and state were you born? (the next questions are for immigrants and will be skipped for those born within the U.S.)
 - a. What is your immigration status? (probe: U.S. citizen, legal resident, undocumented, etc.)
 - b. What year did you come to the US?
 - c. How well do you speak English? Fluently, somewhat fluently, or very little or not at all?

Work Experience

8. How long have you worked at this location?
9. How many hours do you work per week?
10. What type of work do you do? What is your job title?
11. How did you hear about this job?
12. What kinds of jobs have you previously worked?
13. How does this packinghouse compare with others you've worked at (if applicable)
14. How does working at a packinghouse compare with working in the fields or other jobs that you've had previously?
15. What are your favorite parts of this job? Your least favorite?
16. How do you typically get to work?
17. Do you feel a sense of community with your coworkers? Your employers?

Family

18. How many people live in your household?
19. What are the ages of each person and their relationship to you? (Probe: How many children do you have currently in your household? Do your parents or your parents-in-law live with you? Is there anyone else living with you? (siblings, cousins, friends, roommates or tenants, etc.)

20. How many people in your household work? Do any children under 18 work in your household? Do these children work only during school breaks or do they work year-round?
21. If they have children under the age of 18 or provide caregiving for elderly, disabled, or sick relatives: How do you balance being a mother (or family caregiver) and working?
 - a. Who watches your children (and/or other relatives) while you're at work? Does this arrangement change during the school year?
 - b. Do you pay for child care/elder care? If so, how much do you pay? Do you consider this affordable?
 - c. Are you satisfied with your current caregiving arrangement or do you wish you had more or better help with the children (or dependent relatives) sometimes?
 - d. What happens if your caregiver gets sick or cannot watch the children for some reason?
22. If married: How long you have you been married?
 - a. Does your spouse work? Where?
 - b. Do they help with the children? Household chores? How much and with what tasks?
12. What type of work did/do your parents do?

Community and Networks

13. How long have you lived in this town (or "area" if living in an unincorporated region)?
14. Do you feel connected to the community you live in? If so, what or who gives you that sense of connection?
15. Do you belong to a church?
16. Are you or your family members active within any other community groups or organizations in the community? Do you or any of your family members participate in organized sports or a sports team? If so, what kind?
17. Have any friends, family members, or coworkers helped you through the drought?
 - a. In what ways?
18. Do you feel that your networks have had a role in how your family deals with the drought?
 - a. If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If no, why not?
19. Do you think people are impacted differently by the drought depending on where they live?
 - a. Can you give examples?
20. How have you seen people in your community respond to the drought?
21. How have you seen people at work respond to the drought?
22. Do you think there is a difference in how people are affected by the drought based on the following characteristics:

- a. Race?
 - b. Documentation status?
 - c. Gender?
 - d. Duration of time in the community?
23. Do you know of any public or community resources to help people with the drought?
- a. Are you utilizing any of them? Why or why not?
24. Have you seen any response from the local/state governments in response to surviving the drought?
- a. Have any resources been taken away or added?
 - b. What resources are currently missing but needed in the community?
25. In your experience, do you feel that people in your community or at workplace have become more active in politics because of the drought? In what ways? Why or why haven't they become more politically active?

Drought and Work

26. Has the drought impacted how much and the type of work you do?
- a. Can you give examples?
27. Has the drought affected you and your family?
- a. In what ways? Probe: Did you experience unemployment or any economic hardships? Was it stressful?
 - b. Have the effects changed over time?
28. How many people in your household are employed?
- a. Has that changed since the onset of the drought?
29. Have you had to make any changes in your life in order to survive the drought?
30. Has the drought caused any uncertainty for your future or the future of your family?
31. Have you had to ask for financial or other help from family members or friends in order to survive the drought?
32. Have working conditions changed since the drought started?
- a. Do you feel like your job is in jeopardy? Does this increase the stress you feel at work?
 - b. Do your supervisors or managers ask you to work harder than they used to or remind you that you are lucky to have this job because there are so few jobs in the community? If so, can you give an example of this?

Mujeres Trabajadoras
Interview Questionnaire-Spanish

Características Demográficas Preliminares

1. ¿Cuál es su edad?
2. ¿Cuál es su raza/ origen étnico?
3. ¿Cuál es su ocupación?
4. ¿Cuál es su estado civil?
5. ¿Tiene hijos ? ¿Cuántos? ¿De qué edades?
6. ¿Quién vive en su casa ? ¿Se cuida a alguien fuera de su familia inmediata? (Es decir, los padres, otros niños o miembros de la familia)
7. ¿En qué país y el estado en que nacieron? (Las siguientes preguntas son para los inmigrantes y se omitirán para los nacidos en los EE.UU.)
 - a. ¿Cuál es su estado migratorio? (Ciudadano EE.UU. , residente legal , indocumentado , etc.)
 - b. ¿En qué año se llega a los EE.UU.?
 - d. ¿Que tan bien hablas ingles? Fluidez , algo con fluidez, o muy poco o nada en absoluto?

Experiencia Laboral

8. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha trabajado en este lugar?
9. ¿Cuántas horas trabaja por semana?
10. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo hace usted ? ¿Cuál es su profesión?
11. ¿Cómo se enteró de este trabajo?
12. ¿Qué tipos de trabajos has trabajado anteriormente ?
13. ¿Cómo se compara este empaque con otros en donde usted ha trabajado (si es aplicable)
14. ¿Cómo se compara trabajar en un empaque al experiencia a trabajar en el campo o otros trabajos donde usted ha trabajado previamente?
15. ¿Qué es su favorita parte de este trabajo? Que menos te gusta?
16. ¿Típicamente, cómo llega al trabajo?
17. ¿Se siente un sentido de comunidad con sus compañeros de trabajo ? Sus empleadores ?

Familia

18. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar?
19. ¿Cuáles son las edades de cada persona y su relación con usted? (Investigar:¿Cuántos hijos tiene actualmente en su hogar ¿Sus padres o sus padres-en-ley viven con usted ¿Hay alguien que vive con usted (hermanos, primos, amigos, compañeros de habitación, etc.)

20. ¿Cuántas personas en su hogar trabajan?
- ¿Alguno de los niños menores de 18 años en su hogar trabajan?
 - ¿Estos niños trabajan sólo durante las vacaciones escolares o ellos trabajan durante todo el año?
21. Si tienen hijos menores de 18 años o proporcionan la prestación de cuidados de familiares ancianos, discapacitados o enfermos: ¿Cómo equilibras ser madre (o cuidador familiar) y el trabajo?
- ¿Quién cuida a sus hijos (y/u otros familiares), mientras estás en el trabajo? ¿Cambia este arreglo durante el año escolar?
 - Paga por el cuidado de niños/cuidado de personas? Si es así, ¿cuánto paga? ¿Considera este asequible?
 - ¿Está satisfecho con el arreglo para el cuidado actual o te gustaría tener más o mejor ayuda con los niños (o los familiares a cargo) a veces?
 - ¿Qué pasa si la persona que cuida a sus hijos (o los familiares a cargo) se enferma o no puede cuidar a los niños?
22. Si es casada: ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene de casada?
- Trabaja su esposo/a? ¿Dónde?
 - ¿Ayudan con los niños? Los quehaceres en la casa? ¿Cuánto y con cuales quehaceres?
23. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo hicieron/hacen tus padres?

Comunidad y Redes

24. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en esta ciudad (o "area" si vive en una area no incorporada)?
25. ¿Se siente conectada con la comunidad que vive? Si es así, ¿qué o quién le da esa sensación de conexión?
26. ¿Pertenece a una iglesia?
27. ¿Es usted o miembros de su familia activo dentro de cualquiera otro grupo comunitario o organizaciones en la comunidad? ¿Usted o algún miembro de su familia participan en deportes organizados o un equipo deportivo? Si es así, ¿qué tipo?
28. Tiene amigos, familiares o compañeros de trabajo que le han ayudado a través de la sequía?
- ¿De qué maneras?
29. ¿Siente que sus redes han tenido un papel en la forma en que su familia hace frente a la sequía?
- En caso afirmativo, de qué manera?
 - Si no, ¿por qué no?
30. ¿Cree que las personas se ven afectadas de manera diferente por la sequía en función del lugar donde viven? (Es decir, dentro de los límites de la ciudad frente contra las áreas no incorporadas, las diferentes partes del condado que han sido afectados en niveles diferentemente por la sequia?)

- a. ¿Puede dar ejemplos?
- 31. ¿Cómo se ha visto la respuesta de personas en su comunidad a la sequía?
- 32. ¿Cómo se ha visto la respuesta de personas en el trabajo a la sequía?
- 33. ¿Cree que hay una diferencia en cómo las personas se ven afectadas por la sequía en base a las siguientes características:
 - a. ¿La raza?
 - b. ¿El estado de la documentación?
 - c. ¿Género?
 - d. ¿Duración de tiempo en la comunidad?
- 34. ¿Conoce recursos públicos o de la comunidad para ayudar a las personas con la sequía?
 - a. ¿Está utilizando cualquiera de ellos? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
- 35. ¿Ha visto ninguna respuesta por parte de los gobiernos locales/estatales en respuesta a como sobrevivir a la sequía?
 - a. ¿Se han disminuido los recursos o añadido?
 - b. ¿Cuáles recursos se necesitan pero no existen en la comunidad?
- 36. En su experiencia, ¿se siente que la gente en su comunidad o en el lugar de trabajo se han vuelto más activo en la política debido a la sequía? ¿De qué maneras? ¿Por qué o por qué no han vuelto más activos políticamente?

La Sequía y el Trabajo

- 37. ¿Ha afectado la sequía la cantidad y el tipo de trabajo que hace?
 - a. ¿Puede dar ejemplos?
- 38. ¿Ha afectado la sequía usted y su familia?
 - a. ¿De qué maneras? (Investiga: ¿Ha experimentado desempleo o cualquier desafíos económicas? Fue estresante?
 - b. Han cambiado los efectos con el tiempo?
- 39. ¿Cuántas personas en su hogar se emplean?
 - a. ¿Que ha cambiado desde el inicio de la sequía?
- 40. ¿Ha tenido que hacer cambios en su vida para sobrevivir a la sequía?
- 41. ¿La sequía causó ninguna incertidumbre para su futuro o el futuro de su familia?
- 42. ¿Ha tenido que pedir ayuda financiera o de otro de los miembros de la familia o amigos para sobrevivir a la sequía?
- 43. ¿Han cambiado las condiciones de su trabajo desde que comenzó la sequía?
 - a. ¿Usted siente que su trabajo está en peligro? ¿Esto incrementa la tensión se siente en el trabajo?
 - b. ¿Le piden sus supervisores que trabajas más duro que antes o te recuerdan que de tienes la suerte de tener este trabajo, ya que hay muy pocos trabajos en la comunidad? Si es así, ¿se puede dar un ejemplo de esto?