Title

"We come here to give away our strength": Embodied social suffering, normalization and medical care among Triqui Mexican migrant laborers

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Publication Date

2006

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

"We Come Here to Give Away Our Strength"

Embodied Social Suffering, Normalization and Medical Care among Triqui Mexican Migrant Laborers

by

Seth M. Holmes

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Medical Anthropology

in the

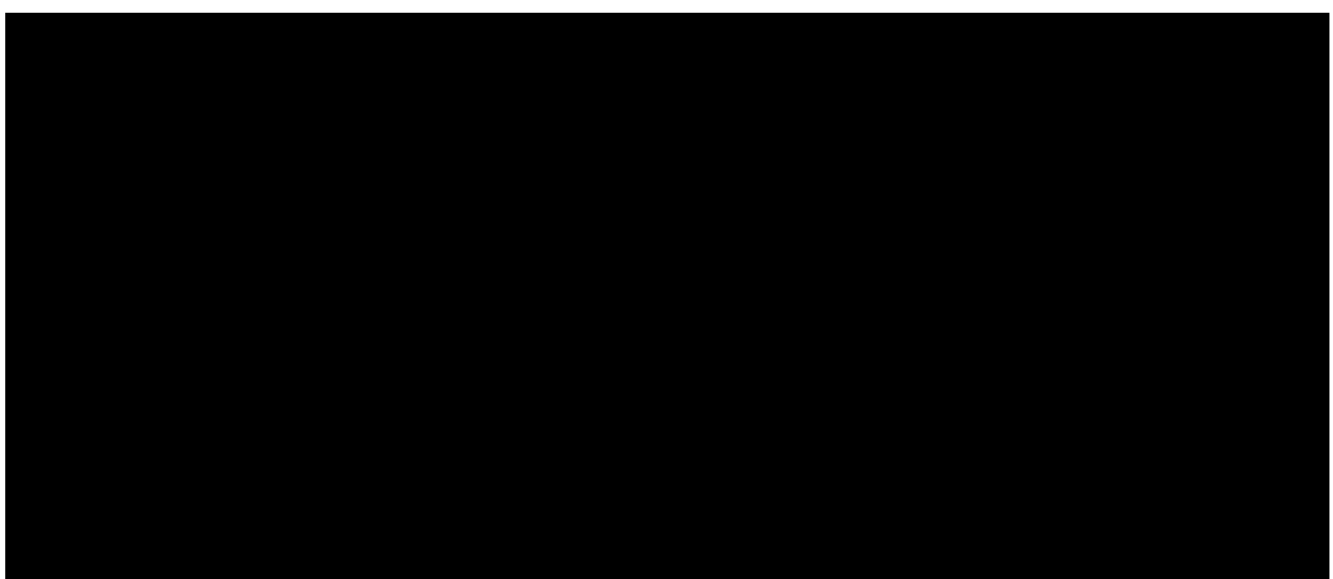
GRADUATE DIVISION

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO

AND

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have received a humbling amount of support and encouragement during the process of research and writing this dissertation. Most importantly, I want to thank the Triqui people who allowed me into their homes in Oaxaca, their shacks in the Washington labor camps, their cars to sleep while homeless and in transit, their apartments in California, and their trust, especially in the borderlands. Those who, over time, trusted me enough to enter into the events of their lives – from births to labor negotiations to border crossings – made my field work possible. As I moved into my "cabin" in the Washington labor camp, I expected to spend a couple years witnessing jarring realities, yet I was surprised and happy to find myself making friends as well. I have altered their names and some of their personal information to protect their privacy, and I cannot thank them all by name. More than anyone, I want to thank the person I call Samuel for trusting me and vouching for me with his family and friends. His family in Oaxaca was amazingly patient and welcoming of this tall, White, bald visitor from the North, even when their neighbors treated me like the CIA agent or drug-trafficker I was often believed to be. His family and friends (as well as some of his detractors) in the U.S. were instrumental in sharing their experiences with me as well as staying in touch with me after I left the field for the computer keyboard. Specifically, Samuel, Joaquin, and José have all lent key insights and guidance for my thinking and writing. They have motivated me regularly, reminding me of the importance of letting others know about the lives of Triqui migrants. In addition, thank you to their families, Marcelina, Crescencio, Abelino, Bernardo, Juana, those who befriended me in Oaxaca, those who trusted me to cross the border with them, and many others.

My research was made possible by many others in the field. The staff and friends of Tierra Nueva Migrant Ministries gave me a sense of community during my first lonely months living in the Washington camp and shared their insights with me. The Tanaka Farm gave me the go-ahead to live in their farm camps, to observe and pick in the fields, and to interview employees. Without this unsupervised first-hand access to the farm, my research would have been watered-down, if not impossible altogether. I am grateful to all the employees on the farm in Washington for allowing me into their world for a time. Thank you, especially, to those whom I have called John, Mike, Sally, Jan, Mateo. The neighbors of the farm and labor camps, residents of Skagit County, gave me important broad insights into farming as well as some of the inter-ethnic stereotypes active in this part of rural America. Thank you especially to my friends, the rabbit owners, their friends down the street, my friends in the Skagit PFLAG, and of course Jerry and his inspiring weekly courthouse vigils. I am grateful to the help from others in Oaxaca, as well, especially Kris Olmsted, Alejandro de Avila, and Fray Eugenio for moral support and space to rest. I thank all the staff of the migrant clinics in Washington State and California who welcomed me readily to learn more about the medical problems and health care of this population. Again, the identities of the people quoted in this dissertation have been altered for their protection and I cannot thank everyone by name.

I want to thank the institutions that generously provided financial support for my work during this project: the Medical Scientist Training Program of the NIH at UCSF, the University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States, the Mustard Seed Foundation, the UCSF Graduate Division Dean's Fellowship, the UCSF Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine, the UCSF Center for Reproductive Health

Research and Policy, and the UCSF School of Medicine Rainer Fund. I also want to thank the following organizations for other kinds of support: Tierra Nueva for quiet space to think and write; the UCSF Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine (and especially amazing Clair Dunne) for tremendous help with the logistical and academic details inherent in such a project; the University of Rochester Division of Medical Humanities and Department of Anthropology for writing space and library support during my writing in upstate New York.

I must thank my family for introducing me from an early age to realities outside of our comfortable semi-suburban family life. I doubt my parents knew how these experiences of inequality would start a process of change in my understandings of society and the world, eventually leading me back to challenge some of my parent's paradigms. My family has taken an active role during my training, reading and commenting on papers, as well as simply visiting and corresponding during my lonely months. Thank you for your ongoing invaluable support, Mom, Dad, Wynn, Deb, Na, Laura, Aidan, Kellan, and Grandparents. Thank you also to my friends who visited me in cards or in person during my field work; Corey and Bethanie, Adam, Kai, Jack, Ippy, Kris, Kelly, Rachel, Cale, Mark and Gwen.

Thank you to Vincanne Adams, Philippe Bourgois and others in the UCSF/B Joint Program in Medical Anthropology; Tris Parslow, Jana Toutolmin and others in the UCSF Medical Scientist Training Program; and Helen Loeser, Maureen Mitchel and others in the UCSF School of Medicine for believing in the possibility of joint training in medicine and the social sciences. Without the joint support of these individuals and institutions, this project would not have been started. I am incredibly grateful for being able to train in a university so open to innovation and tolerant of unconventional perspectives.

I am grateful for many official and unofficial advisors: Chris Kiefer for being amazingly accessible and responsive to my writing, Lawrence Cohen and Vincanne Adams for opening my mind to new ideas, Gay Becker for close and exceptionally constructive readings of my work, Donald Moore for one of the best social theory seminars I ever had, Judith Justice and Jeanne Simonelli for modeling an anthropological engagement in the world of international health, Paul Farmer for modeling passionate and pragmatic solidarity, Catherine Maternowska and Loie Lorentzen for practical insights into working on migration, Jim Quesada and Rosemarie Chierichi for engaging discussions on migration as well as moral support, Duane Grobman and Carolyn Nordstrom for long-distance encouragement on writing, the UCB Center for Latin American Studies for creating spaces for scholars engaged in vital issues in Latin America, the UCSD Center for Comparative Immigration Studies for providing a spatially-extended community of immigration scholar mentors and colleagues, Tom Boyce and Nancy Adler for supporting my passions even though I was not their student, Seventh Avenue Church for believing my research was valuable in seeking justice, No More Deaths (especially Jennifer Hill) and Daniel Ramirez for giving me a place to recover from my time in the Arizona desert, Joe Figini and Heather Williams for legal advice and moral support before and after my meeting with the Border Patrol, John Hughes and Susan Phillips for keeping me sane in the midst of this wonderful and tiring work; and Steve McPhee for modeling deep compassion for those who are suffering.

Above all, I am grateful for the invaluable advice, comments, and moral support of my advisor, Philippe Bourgois. Thank you for the multiple meetings and long-distance phone calls over the past several years complete with academic advice, theoretical ideas, as well as a listening ear for a student sometimes depressed by the difficult realities he was

experiencing. Thank you for making Marx and Bourdieu's critical concepts related to social inequality and struggle come to life for me. Your writing style, which is somehow personal, theoretical, and engaged at the same time, has inspired me. Thank you to all the members of my dissertation committee: Nancy Scheper-Hughes for modeling passionate and engaged teaching as well as an impressively eclectic combination of theoretical perspectives, Loïc Wacquant for precise explanations of critical social theory as applied to contemporary social situations, Stanley Brandes for supportive analytic and writing advice in an amazing dissertation writing seminar, and Tom Denberg for challenging insights into the integration of anthropological research and academic medicine. Thank you to my colleagues in anthropology, especially Maya Ponte, Ippolytos Kalofonos, and the Violence in the Americas Writing Group of the UCB Center for Latin American Studies, who read multiple drafts of this and other papers.

This thesis is dedicated to the Triqui people of San Miguel. May their stories, experiences and voices be heard in its pages, dismantling stereotypes that normalize unequal social structures and unnecessary social suffering.

Seth Holmes
San Francisco, CA
Winter, 2006

ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides an ethnographic account of embodied social suffering and its naturalization among Triqui migrant workers in the U.S. and Mexico. Based on over fifteen months of full-time anthropological fieldwork with undocumented, Triqui migrant laborers from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, it explores ethnicity, citizenship, labor, and suffering hierarchies as well as the processes by which these are rendered invisible, normal, and natural. The dissertation begins by describing the segregation of farm labor along an intricate ethnicity-citizenship hierarchy that, in turn, produces suffering and illness. The ethnographic data clarifies that this injurious hierarchy is not willed by the farm executives, who are preoccupied primarily with the economic survival of their family farm. Rather, the structure of farm labor is determined by market rule and then channeled through international and domestic racism, classism, sexism, and anti-"illegal" immigrant prejudices.

Meanwhile, most physicians in the local migrant clinic cannot see the social determinants of suffering through their "clinical gaze" (Foucault 1994) and, utilizing behavioral health conceptions, inadvertently blame the patients for their sicknesses. This incomplete and, at times, harmful treatment derives from the contemporary medical paradigm in which trainees are given lenses to see biological and behavioral, but not social, determinants of sickness. The farm executives and clinicians operate in a sort of "gray zone" (Levi 1988), in which their most earnest efforts at ethical action are constrained and, at times, reversed. The hierarchies described above are rarely problematized by any group of people on the farm, even the most dominated. Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's (1997) concept of symbolic violence, this dissertation indicates how these hierarchies become naturalized through the metaphor of perceived bodily differences, including ethnic conceptions of pride

and resistance that affirm these differences. The taken-for-granted nature of this social asymmetry, then, fosters its justification and reproduction. The dissertation concludes with possibilities for structural intervention and pragmatic solidarity (Farmer 1999) along multiple levels of the micro to macro continuum, including an invitation to practice "liberation medicine" (Scheper-Hughes 1992, Smith and Hilsbos 1999).

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INTRODUCTION

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> "We dedicate everything to the fields, we are field workers. We are workers; even since we're born we're planting. ... Poor people from Oaxaca come here, and I don't know...we come here to give away our strength and everything and they don't do anything for us. ... Because of our will this government survives." -Samuel, 31yo Triqui father, speaking with his family and me over a tamale dinner in his shack in a berry farm's labor camp, rural Washington State, Summer 2004.

The Triqui migrants and I are field workers. My Triqui companions harvest strawberries and blueberries in the fields of Washington State as well as grapes and asparagus in the fields of California year after year. They "dedicate everything to the fields," their labor and skills, their energy and time, their identities and reputations, as well as their minds and bodies. The time they could have spent learning in school is instead spent working in the fields to earn money for survival. Their bodies that could have labored calmly with their family members in their own corn fields in Oaxaca or alternatively sat quietly working behind a desk are offered the sole prospect by the international market to pick fruit bent over all day, every day, moving frantically, exposed to pesticides and the weather. As a result of their forced dedication to the U.S. agricultural fields, their bodies ache, decay and become progressively diseased.

My field, though spatially overlapping theirs for a time, involves a different kind of labor. I seek to understand the political and economic, cultural and social components of

migrant labor and migrant health by spending time in what anthropologists call "the field." My fieldwork over fifteen months followed the lives of the Triqui migrant laborers documented in this dissertation through Washington, Oregon, California, Oaxaca, and the borderlands of Sonora/Arizona. During this time, I dedicated my eyes, my ears, my mind, my fingertips, and my bodily experiences to the production of field notes. Ultimately, I hope that my research and writing from the field will result in bringing to light and work toward ameliorating the social suffering inherent to migrant labor in North America.

WHY STUDY MIGRANT WORKERS?

The UN Population Division estimates (using an exceedingly narrow definition) that there are "175 million migrants in the world," 46% more than a decade ago (Migration News 2003a). Each year, the U.S. employs nearly 2 million seasonal farm laborers, 900,000 of whom are migrants (Rothenberg 1998 xvii). The U.S. deports approximately 4,000 people a week, mostly to Mexico, while the Board of Immigration Appeals has a backlog of 56,000 cases (Migration News 2003b). Some estimated 4,896 immigrants under 18 years of age were apprehended and detained in the U.S. in 2001, most along the border with Mexico (Ibid.). Regardless of the financial status of these children-detainees, the U.S. government will not provide defense attorneys (Ibid.). In addition, the US-Mexico Border Counties Coalition claims that 77 hospitals along the border are in a state of emergency due to the uncompensated costs of emergency treatment of Mexican migrants (Ibid.).

In 1994, the voters in California passed the "Save Our State" initiative denying public services (including health care, education, etc) to anyone determined or "reasonably suspect[ed]" to be undocumented. In 2004, Arizona voters passed the "Arizona Taxpayer

and Citizen Protection Act" requiring proof of citizenship in order to vote, proof of immigration status in order to receive unspecified "public benefits," and criminal charges against public employees who do not report undocumented people. Currently, there is a movement in California to pass the "Save Our License" (see www.saveourlicense.com) initiative adding more strict denials of public services to those suspected of being undocumented as well as criminal charges for service providers who do not comply with reporting requirements.

On January 1, 2003 NAFTA deregulated all agricultural trade except for corn and dairy-products, which will be unprotected in 2008 (Rural Migration News 2003). The Mexican government complains that since NAFTA's initial implementation in 1994, the U.S. has raised farm subsidies 300% (Ibid.). Throughout the 1990s, a cash-strapped Mexican government, on the other hand, has reduced financial supports for corn-producers, most of them indigenous *campesinos* (Ibid.), leading more and more to have to migrate in order to survive. Many Mexican activists are pressing the Mexican government to renegotiate NAFTA so that more farm owners and workers will not be forced by poverty to emigrate for wage-labor (Ibid.).

In various rural parts of Mexico, rebel groups have risen up, some armed and some not, to demand a change to the neo-liberal structural violence justified by regimes of "development" and "free trade." Such groups demand "work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace" (Marcos 1994). Several communiqués from such groups point out displacement as a specific motivation for their uprising (e.g. Marcos 1994, Ejército Popular Revolucionario 2002). These groups, along with anyone suspected of related to them, then, are subject to massacres and disappearances

at the hands of military and paramilitary groups (e.g. see Amnesty International 1986, Franco 2002, INS 1998).

Clearly, migration and diaspora are significant, violent and painful realities in the contemporary world. They are intimately and complexly related with other modern problems—neo-liberal market policies, increasing global poverty, representations of "development," de-centralized warfare, etc. As seen above, what is often called "the migrant problem" (see, e.g. Sassen 1998 ch. 3, Grillo 1985, Bustamante 1983, Quesada 1999) is particularly compelling in the U.S. as it relates to diasporic Mexican farm workers. These laborers are threatened by various brutalities in Mexico and the U.S. and are the focus of ongoing debates on immigration law and policy in both countries. Yet, we know relatively little about the everyday lives, labor and suffering of this largely hidden population. In order to confront these distressing realities, it is vital that we begin to understand more fully what causes people to have to migrate, the suffering effected by the living and working conditions of Mexican migrants in the U.S., the responses of migrant health clinicians and policy-makers, as well as the stereotypes that normalize these problems.

The Triqui of Oaxaca, Mexico, have begun migrating to work in agriculture in the U.S. in the last ten to fifteen years. This group comes from several villages in the mountains of the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, Mexico. They now make up the majority of farm labor in North Western Washington, a few areas of Oregon, and a few small parts of California. Their history is defined by dominance from many sides—Spanish conquerors, American Protestant missionaries, Mexican politicians, as well as neighboring mestizo and indigenous groups. Their present is permeated by a well-known reputation of violence both from outside and from within the group. Due to their history of oppression, their violent present, as well

as the relatively recent move into migrant labor, this group is especially appropriate for the study of social suffering in migration.

In addition, as Daniel Rothenberg pointed out in 1998, there are intimate connections between migrant farm workers and the rest of the American public. Migrant farm workers' hands were the last hands to touch most of the fruit and vegetables that are then touched in local grocery produce lines by those likely to read Rothenberg's book (or my dissertation). There may be machine processing in-between the two sets of hands, yet the personal fact remains that it is likely that the last hands to hold the blueberries or strawberries or asparagus or lettuce before you, the reader, hold them, belong to Latin American laborers. It seems only respectful of this intimacy to be concerned with the living and working conditions of those providing much of the food we Americans take for granted.

EMBODIED ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropologists throughout history have imagined themselves plainly documenting facts from the outside world. As Scheper-Hughes states, "they pretended that there was no ethnographer in the field." She argues that they treated "the self as if 'it' were an invisible and permeable screen through which pure data, "facts," could be objectively filtered and recorded..."(1992). Our selves, our bodies, are taken for granted and assumed to be simply a tool utilized for observation (if thought of at all). By and large, we have failed to consider our bodies in the experiences of fieldwork. While the documentation of "facts" is important and may be a matter of life or death (as referenced above in the role of clerk of the records), it is also essential for anthropologists to reflect on their own embodied experiences of fieldwork. Paul Stoller calls for "sensuous scholarship," which would "incorporate into

ethnographic works the sensuous body – its smells, tastes, textures, and sensations" (1997). Though Stoller focuses more on the body of his Songhay informants than on his own embodied experiences, a focus on the ethnographer's body could be seen as a corollary form of sensuous scholarship or perhaps as embodied anthropology. Loïc Wacquant uses the word, "carnal," to indicate fieldwork that reflects upon the body of the ethnographer (2005).

On a theoretical note, I use the word "body" not within a reiteration of Western assumptions of a mind-body dichotomy, but rather something akin to Margaret Lock and Scheper-Hughes' concept of a "mindful body" (1987). In this phrase, the authors attempt to undo the disconnection between mind and body common in Western societies by arguing that the body itself feels and thinks, is "mindful." In a similar fashion, Maurice Merleau-Ponty offers a phenomenological philosophy in which the body is a subject-object interacting actively with everything else in the world, all of which is also a subject-object (1996). Thus, the body is not something that "I have" or that "I use" to find data, but rather "I am" my body and my body "itself" produces field data.

In my own dissertation fieldwork, my bodily experiences lent valuable insights into social suffering, power hierarchies, and the implications of field work relationships. It was not only my eyes and ears that collected valuable field observations, but also the back of my neck as cold rain seeped down the inside of my farm-issued rain gear; my sore knees, hips and lower back from bending over all day in strawberry fields; my foggy and tired mind from night after night of sleep interrupted by rain leaking on my face as well as freezing wind and noises surging through the permeable walls in the migrant camp; my acidic stomach showing signs of stress before a day of racing against the clock to keep my picking job; my dehydrated throat, exhausted legs, and overactive imagination in the midst of running

through the deadly Arizona desert after several days of struggle approaching the border. These were several ways in which my body offered important field notes on social suffering. Without paying attention to my bodily experiences, I would have missed out on much valuable data about the everyday lives of migrant laborers.

My body offered insights not only via experiences of the living and working conditions of migrant laborers, but also as I generated particular responses from those around me. In many circumstances, my light-skinned, tall, student-dressed, English-speaking body was treated very differently from the bodies of my Triqui companions. The supervisors on the farms never called me deprecatory names like they did the Oaxacan workers. Instead, they often stopped to talk and joke with me, all the while picking berries into my bucket to help me make the minimum required weight. The social semiotics of bodies led to my being treated as an equal, a friend, even a superior, while the Oaxacans were treated most often as inferiors, imbeciles, animals, or machines.

Usually on payday, one or more of the Triqui families I knew went to Burger King for dinner and, by the end of my fieldwork, I had become an invited guest. On one such day, I went with one of my Triqui companions, Samuel, and his family of five in their mini-van to the local Burger King. We ordered the usual: four Whoppers, four large fries and two kid's meals. This time, however, the four Whoppers and two kid's meals came with three medium fries. Without thinking about social status, I suggested one of us go and ask for the right fries. Samuel and his wife, Leticia, looked at each other with furrowed brows. They agreed they could never do such a thing because they would not be given different fries and they would likely get in trouble for asking. Samuel told me to go up to see what they would do to a *gabacho* (white American). As I expected, they gave us four large fries and apologized

kindly-resentfully. Samuel was amazed. My body was treated as though it had or deserved power, whereas theirs have been treated repeatedly as underlings undeserving of respect.

All too often, similar inequalities of treatment played out in other contexts. Multiple times in the migrant clinics of Washington and California, Triqui companions of mine were charged incorrectly, given the inappropriate medicines, and generally treated as inferiors who should obey unquestioningly. After observing or hearing about these events, if I approached a clinic staff member for help, I was greeted with a kind apology and a quick rectification of the situation. When my Triqui friends asked for help, they were often brushed off or told not to ask questions, "period."

My Triqui companions regularly slunk down fearfully as they asked me if a car or truck with a sign on the side was the INS or the police. I hardly ever noticed these cars before they were pointed out to me. My Triqui friends kept their cars in perfect shape, every windshield crack filled, every light bulb functioning well, every sticker in its assigned place, and of course the speed always under the limit in order that the police would not pull them over. I, on the other hand, never thought of these details. Some of the migrants spoke of "Driving While Brown" to indicate the effect of racial-citizenship profiling. Any miniscule problem with their cars or their driving would become an excuse for pulling them over which, in turn, could lead to their deportation. Though the law in Washington State does not allow local police to perform racial profiling and report suspected undocumented Mexicans to the Border Patrol, police officers often contact Border Patrol officers for translation assistance. Once present, the Border Patrol agent can check documentation and most often deports those without, breeding distrust of law enforcement officers in general. I knew that I would likely never be pulled over for a small crack in my windshield or a brake light out, and

if I was I would get a simple, if authoritarian, verbal warning. After many months of living, eating, seeking medical treatment, and driving with migrant workers in the U.S., it became clear that everyone around us recognized my body as belonging significantly higher in our society's power structure than did the bodies of my Triqui friends.

In addition to the comprehension of social suffering and strong social hierarchies, my embodied experiences also led me to recognize the impossibility of separating research from human relationships. Despite my training in social theory and reading many ethnographies, I rather subconsciously assumed I would simply spend a year migrating with Triqui people in order to write about an important and difficult reality. Given that most ethnographies give the impression of an unchanged and often uninvolved anthropologist, I did not consider seriously how I might be changed myself. My experience of fieldwork could not be more dissimilar.

First, I have become more involved in the social requirements of friendship than I had imagined beforehand. As people slowly allowed me into their lives, homes and confidences, I became more an odd friend than a researcher. After living together in the same labor camps, picking berries together, going to the same clinics, and sleeping in the back of the same cars, people began to trust that I may indeed be a student and not a CIA agent. After about four months of fieldwork, the rumor went around camp that the *gabacho chakuh'* (bald white American) simply wanted to "*conocer como sufren los pobres*" (experience for himself how the poor suffer). This phrase will be considered further in Chapter 2. This became the explanation used by Triqui laborers when introducing me to other Mexican people. This increasing trust led me to be invited to meals, births, healings, and even a strike. It also led me to be an unwitting part and recipient of family feuds, hatred, and rumors. The unexpected

reality of relationship has led to sometimes frustrating calls from across the country for help in dealing with a clinic, the people who stole my friend's car, or the police. It brings expectations of expensive flights across the country and of regular phone calls.

Friendship, of course, has meant that I participate in a version of the gift-exchange practices of my companions from the Triqui Zone of Oaxaca. In exchange for trusting me with their everyday lives, I spent a fair amount of money, time, and stress bringing more than my airplane- and bus-share of bags full of Triqui food, bright pink hair pins, birth certificates, cactus needles for sewing, hundred dollar bills, broken cameras, and new stereos to and from Oaxaca, California, and Washington for family members who could not travel as freely across borders as I. I also gently and nervously turned down many requests to take cars, vans, and U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents across the border.

These relationships brought not only the foreseeable requirements and benefits mentioned above, but also expectations of solidarity, advocacy and activism. A body cannot live the reality of another class of people without being changed. In my case, I see this in my altered experience of the fruit I eat and the rural vistas I encounter, in my remembering of the often hidden complexities of the social structures in which I and my living conditions are embedded, as well as in my lingering back and hip pains. One way in which I was changed involved the increased expectation from my Triqui companions and desire from within myself to be involved in actions for local and larger scale structural change. Most weeks of my fieldwork, I was approached multiple times for assistance in interactions with stores, clinics, traffic police, or state WIC programs for U.S. citizen children. Without these invitations to extremely micro, local forms of advocacy, I would not have understood the inordinate amount of time and energy spent by my companions negotiating interactions with

U.S. society. I would not have understood how poorly migrant workers are treated, nor how much the presence of a white American could impact the course of events.

These regular experiences of prejudice and hierarchy fed my desire to work for larger social change. Although most of my Triqui friends take for granted their position in the world the majority of the time, sometimes a few of them question the organization of society and of North America. In these moments, I have been asked to stay involved in their lives, to keep talking and writing about their lives, and to work alongside them for a better future. I have been asked to invite them to speak to other *gabachos* – and have been shocked how often conferences on migration include no migrants, even though migrants are presumably experts on the topic. In the Conclusion, I plan to flesh out some suggestions, from the Triqui people I know and from myself, for positive change.

From experiences of the living and working conditions of migrant laborers, to the intricacies of becoming involved in a web of relationships, to the corollary expectations and desires for active solidarity, my embodied experiences enriched my field work in unexpected ways. Alongside the imperative role of record-keeper is the critical anthropologist's responsibility to acknowledge the field notes offered by one's body. This embodied experience offers significant thickness and vividness to the ethnographic description of everyday life, including such critical realities as social suffering, inequality and hierarchy, and local and global solidarity. In this dissertation, I attempt a critically interpretive *and reflexively embodied* anthropology of suffering.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This dissertation endeavors to uncover the linkages among suffering, social inequalities due to structural violence, and the normalizing symbolic violence of stereotypes and prejudices. It attempts to do this while telling the stories of indigenous Mexican migrant laborers who are largely hidden from public view. By structural violence, I mean the violence committed by social structures of inequalities (what Engels calls "social murder" 1975) that, in the end, have similar injurious effects as the violence of a stabbing or shooting. In the U.S. today, most structural violence seems to be organized around the fault lines of class, race, gender, and citizenship (see Bourgois 1998, Eber 1995, Farmer 1992, 1997, 1998; Kleinman and Kleinman 1994; Scheper-Hughes 1992, 2002, 2003; Singer and Baer 1995).[1]

Symbolic violence is a concept from the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, that indicates the interrelations of social structures of inequalities and perceptions (see especially 1997, 2001). For Bourdieu, the lenses through which we perceive the social world are issued forth from that very social world such that we recognize (or misrecognize) this world – and its inequalities – as natural. Symbolic violence is enacted primarily passively by social structures, while it tends to benefit those with more power (see Bourgois 1995, 2001; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Klinenberg 1999). Structural violence – with its pernicious effects on health – and symbolic violence – with its subtle naturalization of inequalities on the farm, in the clinic, and in the media – form the nexus of violence and suffering through which the phenomena of migrant labor in North America is structured. This study attempts to understand how structural and symbolic violence might help us make

[1] Wacquant (2004) points out potential analytical pitfalls in the overly generalized, nonspecific use of the term, "structural violence." In order to avoid conflating different forms of violence, I use the phrase narrowly, staying close to Johan Galtung's as well as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois' focus on political economic domination (Galtung 1969, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2003). The effects of structural domination are thus analyzed separately from, among other phenomena, everyday physical violence, armed political violence, and symbolic violence enacted with the complicity of the dominated (see Bourgois 2001). The phrase is helpful in indicating that social structures can do "peace-time" violence that has the same effects as other forms of violence, though on a different time scale (Engels 1958).

sense of the lives, labor and suffering of Triqui migrant laborers in Mexico and the U.S. More generally, it endeavors to understand how certain groups or classes of people become written-off or deemed less human as well as how social inequalities in general become taken for granted.

As indicated in the Preface, I use the words "migrate," "migrant," and "migration" in this dissertation simply because these are most commonly understood in the U.S. At the same time, I do not want to indicate an uncritical assent to the assumptions that may be found behind these words. As scholars of globalization point out (especially Rouse 2002), those who write of "immigration" and "migration" often assume movement between distinct and disconnected places and communities. For my Triqui companions, however, migration is more an experience of forced movement for survival that involves what might be called a complex "transnational circuit" (*Ibid.*) of people and money. The relatives of a young Triqui girl, whether in person in California or via telephone from Oaxaca, weigh in on the decision of whether or not to let her suitor marry her. The few houses with gas stoves instead of wood fires and the several houses made of concrete with concrete floors instead of wood panels with dirt floors in the hometown of my Triqui companions have been built with monetary remittances from relatives in the U.S. Clearly, there are important interconnections between places and people in the Triqui experience of migration.

At the same time, many who write of "immigration" or "migration" assume (and politicians often demand) what they call "assimilation," the slow erasure of difference through the adoption of mainstream cultural practices by the im/migrants. Yet, scholars in diaspora studies (especially Gilroy 1989 and Hall 1990) remind us that identities and practices of those who migrate are "hybridized," both maintained and transformed through

their interactions with other people and places. For example, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, most Triqui people continue in the tradition of a young man (perhaps 17yo) offering to pay the equivalent of a few thousand dollars to the family of a younger woman (perhaps 14yo) to become his wife. At the same time in the U.S., a few Triqui husbands have been put in federal prisons charged with "statutory rape" for having a child with their wives (who are considered "underage" in the U.S.) and a few Triqui couples have been told by hospital workers that they are not legally married and therefore cannot visit each other while sick. Thus, some Triqui young men are beginning to propose a legal, Mexican-style Church wedding to the women they want to marry. While it would be incredibly ethnocentric to demand assimilation, it would be unintelligent as well to posit that the culture of migrants is entirely unaffected by the conditions and cultures in which they move. As discussed in Appendix B, I seek to keep these insights without using the rather cumbersome phrase "transnational circuit" nor the relatively unfamiliar word, "diaspora."

FIELDWORK ON THE MOVE

In order to understand the issues described above, I performed fieldwork utilizing the classic anthropological research method, participant-observation. This involves long-term immersion in the everyday lives and practices of a group of people, while including more specific conversations and interviews (further explanation of anthropological methods and analysis may be found in Appendix A). This dissertation corresponds to the "follow the people" multi-sited fieldwork outlined by George Marcus as one way to do ethnography that takes seriously the interconnections inherent in the modern world (1998). At the same time, I

seek to document the lives and words of my Triqui companions, perhaps reminiscent of Nancy Scheper-Hughes' "anthropologist as clerk of the records" (1992).

I actively searched for an important and interesting dissertation project during the first three years of my anthropology training, especially during my winter and summer vacations. Due to the critical social, political and health issues related to U.S.-Mexico migration mentioned above, I settled on working in this context. Jaime, director of a non-profit working with migrant laborers in the Skagit Valley of Washington State and friend through mountaineering activities, encouraged me to work with the Triqui people from San Martin, Oaxaca. He explained that this group of people had only recently begun migrating to the U.S., that they had a reputation for being violent, and that they lived and worked in very unhealthy environments in Washington State and California.

I decided to visit the hometown, San Martin, in Oaxaca, Mexico, of many Triqui migrants in Washington and California in the Spring of 2003. Upon arriving in Tlaxiaco, a primarily mestizo city nearby San Martin, I was told by several residents not to go to San Martin. By long-term Protestant missionaries, waiters, and drivers of *suburbans* (passenger vans regularly giving rides between large towns), I was told explicit and detailed stories of people being kicked out of San Martin, killed, or their cars stolen. After getting off the *suburban* and walking up the several mile dirt road to San Martin, I approached the *Presidencia* (town government building). I told the four men there that I was a friend of Jaime, a social worker and pastor in Washington State who works with many Triqui migrants from San Martin. I was greeted with cold silence followed by the authorities speaking quickly in Triqui that I was not able to follow and then one of them asked, "*¿Cuál Jaime?*" (Which Jaime?). When they appeared convinced I knew the same Jaime they knew, the man

with the white plastic *sombrero* invited me to his house to eat. We walked up the dusty hill in silence, as I wondered what I had gotten myself into. I tried various questions like "For how long have people from San Martin been going to the U.S.?", "Have you heard of a social movement called the MULT here?", "When was the first time you went to the U.S.?". I was greeted with dusty wind and silence. The whole meal proceeded the same way, in silence. Afterward, I thanked the man and his wife for the food and returned to the main road where I would catch the next passing *suburban.*

After returning to the U.S. and processing this experience, I remembered Erik Wolf's article about closed corporate communities in Mesoamerica (1957). According to Wolf, due to pressures from the Spanish conquerors, indigenous groups separated themselves from each other in language, dress, and confidence. Indigenous communities in Mesoamerica became suspicious of any outsiders. I decided it would not be easy, perhaps impossible and even dangerous as several people had suggested, to begin my fieldwork in San Martin.

With the help of Jaime as well as one of my childhood neighbors who now lived in the Skagit Valley, I began my fieldwork in northwestern Washington State. My former childhood neighbor had become the pastor of the Church attended by the President of the largest farm in the area. She helped me get permission from the farm's President to live and work on the berry farm. Jaime and his co-workers introduced me to several families of Triqui, Mixteco and mestizo Mexican migrants I met in this area. With this tenuous entrée, I moved into my one-room shack in the farm's largest migrant labor camp in the early summer of 2003. I lived there the rest of the summer and fall, surviving the poor conditions described by one friend as "one inch above squalor," squatting down all day picking berries with the rest of the people from the camp, slowly getting to know migrant workers and other farm

employees, as well as observing and interviewing migrant clinic workers and other area residents.

In November 2003, I accompanied an extended family of twenty-three Triqui people as they drove from Washington to the Central Valley of California. We drove below the speed limit in a caravan all night, eating home-made tacos and napping at rest stops along the way. We spent a week homeless in Madera, California, sleeping in our cars, and washing ourselves in the city parks. Each day we drove the town's street grid looking for housing until we found a three-bedroom, one bathroom slum apartment. That winter, nineteen of us (including four children under five years of age) shared this three-bedroom apartment, looked for work, visited the local migrant clinic and hospital and Department of Social and Health Services, and occasionally worked a few days pruning grape vines. I chose to sleep in the hall closet of the slum apartment instead of the doorless living room with three other adults so that I could have privacy.

I spent the Spring of 2004 in the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, in the small hometown of the Triqui people I had come to know in the U.S. I lived in the partially-constructed house of Samuel, whom I had come to know in the U.S., along with his extended family. The house was plain concrete slabs built entirely with money sent from Samuel, who was working in the U.S. I used the same latrine as the family, visited the same government health center when I got sick, carried water from the same well, helped harvest and plant corn and beans, and took the bulls and sheep to pasture with the children from the family. During this time, I experienced what Eric Wolf described as a "closed corporate community" (1957). The Triqui town, San Martin, proved to be very suspicious of and unfriendly toward outsiders. I was repeatedly warned about violence as well as accused of being a spy for the

CIA or the U.S. police or even a drug trafficker. A handful of times, I was threatened with being killed, kidnapped, and put in jail specifically because "white Americans [*gabachos*] should not be here."

In April, I accompanied a group of nine young men from this town as they rode buses non-stop for three days from the state of Oaxaca to the state of Sonora, Mexico. After arriving in a notoriously dangerous small town in Sonora, we stayed in an unfurnished apartment without water or a lock as we waited to be taken to the place from which we would attempt to cross the border and worried about being robbed and beaten. A van and then a pick-up carried us to the border about sunset the next day. We quickly crossed the cruel desert of Arizona without documentation jumping over barbed wire fences, avoided cactuses and rattlesnakes in the darkness, and tried not to attract the attention of helicopters overhead. At approximately seven in the morning, as we rested in a dried-up desert streambed and waited for a contact to give us a ride to Phoenix, we were caught by the U.S. border patrol. After a day in the border patrol jail, I was released with a fine. I met up with my friends who re-crossed the border (*la linea*) about a week afterward again in Madera, California. I spent the rest of May, 2004, living there and then migrated with the families there to the same labor camp in Washington State for the Summer of 2004. Along the way, we picked up false social security cards and attempted to get legal driver's licenses. As I wrote this thesis for the next year and a half, I returned to visit my Triqui companions in Washington, California and Oaxaca on shorter week-long trips.

DISSERTATION LAYOUT

Although, I have written this dissertation with the primarily traditional format of substantial chapters, I seek to keep the unfolding narrative nature of my experience of migration present through the inclusion of significant quotations from my field notes and interview transcripts. This strategy attempts to show the everyday drama of this project as well as the experiences of my body in the process of multi-sited fieldwork in-transit. In Chapter One, I describe first-hand the labor segregation in American agriculture that leads to highly structured hierarchies of ethnicity, suffering, and even experiences of time itself. Sickness as the embodiment of violence forms the focus of the second chapter, utilizing the stories of three Triqui migrant laborers to show that illness is often the manifestation of structural, symbolic, and political violence as well as resistance and rebellion.

Chapter Three endeavors to make sense of the acontextual blinders through which migrant health physicians and nurses see the plights of their patients and, thereby, inadvertently add insult to injury by blaming the victims of structural inequalities. Chapter Four considers the crucial issue of how such hierarchies become taken for granted, analyzing the normalization of social and health inequalities as a nexus of several forms of symbolic violence. For those at each rung of this social ladder, perceptions and assumptions naturalize the position of those above, of those below and – perhaps even more disturbingly – of one's own group. This chapter prompts worries about representing the poor, however, along with Philippe Bourgois (1995), I believe it is important to portray marginalized people as humans, showing the odds and prejudices they are up against. The Conclusion of this dissertation deals with the future of Triqui migrants and the possibility of hope. It issues a call to listen to the stories of migrant laborers, have solidarity with their social movements, and work toward changes at multiple levels from micro farm practices to macro global issues.

I attempt to analyze this data in order to better understand ethnographically the social and symbolic context of suffering among Triqui migrant laborers. I hope that understanding the mechanisms by which certain classes of people become written off and social inequalities become taken-for-granted will play a part in undoing these very mechanisms and the structures of which they are part. It is my hope that those who read these stories will be moved in compassion and mutual humanity such that representations and policies toward migrant laborers might become more humane, just, and responsive to the migrant laborers themselves. Perhaps we can begin to see Mexican migrant workers as fellow humans, as skilled and hard workers, as people treated unfairly with the odds against them. I hope these recognitions can change public opinion, employer and clinical practices as well as immigration and labor policies for the better. Without such hopes, this dissertation seems unworthy of the time and angst it has taken to research and write.

CHAPTER ONE

SEGREGATION ON THE FARM
ETHNIC HIERARCHIES AT WORK

THE SKAGIT VALLEY

The Skagit River flows west from the magnificent peaks of the North Cascades National Park in northwestern Washington State to the Pacific Ocean's Puget Sound, pouring through some of the most spectacular vistas in North America. The river is located roughly halfway between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, about an hour and a half drive from each. The valley is made up of berry fields, apple orchards and the dark green pine tree stands common in the rainy Pacific Northwest, with the occasional brightly colored tulip field or brown dirt field lying fallow. Skagit County uneasily links up-river logging towns in the mountains such as Concrete; railroad towns at the base of the mountains like Burlington; flood-plain farming towns including Bow in the flats; coastal up-scale villages like La Conner at the mouth of the river; and native American reservations such as Lumi Island. The area is perhaps most famous for its tulip festival every Spring, though it receives many other visitors to patronize the giant Skagit Casino as well as to take advantage of its many hiking trailheads. Skagit County figures in the imaginations of most Washingtonians as the land of idyllic farmland with views of mountain peaks and Puget Sound Islands.

Most of the County's agriculture can be found in the low, flat flood-plain of the Skagit River. This land is protected from the tides of the Puget Sound by a grass dike some five-feet tall that gently curves along the meeting of the valley and the bay. The wide dirt path atop the dike has some of the most stunning three-hundred-and-sixty degree views on

Earth. To the west, the sun sets amidst the San Juan Islands. The coastal mountains of Washington and British Columbia lie immediately to the north. To the east, rises the glacier-covered volcano, Mt. Baker, surrounded by several other magnificent snow-capped mountains. Large, dilapidated wooden barns peep out from patchwork tulip and berry fields to the south. Though one might notice as well the putrid exhaust hovering over the ocean near a paper mill in the distance.

The valley is made up of several towns lining Interstate-5, with charming turn-of-the-century, brick and wood town centers surrounded by ever-expanding strip malls, apartment buildings, and cookie cutter housing developments. The extravagant homes of the local elites boast magnificent views from the wooded hills and the coastline at the edges of the valley. Most of the land now covered by the uninspiring strip malls had been a flower or berry field a mere five or ten years ago. In the valley, one commonly hears heartrending stories related to the difficult state of family farming in the U.S – stories of neighbor Benson's diary farm closing after five generations because they could not compete with corporate agribusiness in the Midwest after recent federal policy changes, farmer Johnson's berry farm dying after nearly a century due to increasing competition from China and Chile, and apple orchardist Christensen's shame at selling the land to the developers of a new Wal-Mart even though the Christensen family had been growing apples ever since arriving in the area from Scandinavia. A common bumper sticker in the Valley rails against this phenomenon: "Save Skagit Farmland, Pavement is Forever." The remaining agricultural land is still cultivated by several family farms, relatively small in comparison with much of U.S. agribusiness.

MIGRANT FARM WORKERS IN THE SKAGIT

As I came to discover over the course of my field work, the Skagit Valley is an important site in multiple transnational circuits (see Rouse 2002) of Mexican farm laborers, including indigenous Mixteco and Triqui people from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. A few thousand migrate here for the tulip-cutting, apple and berry-picking seasons in the spring and live several months in squatter shacks made of cardboard, plastic sheets, and broken-down cars or in company-owned labor camps, often in close proximity to the multi-level houses of local elites who have picturesque views of the valley. The migrant camps look like lines of rusted tin-roofed tool sheds lined up within a few feet of each other or small chicken coups in long rows. The plywood walls are semi-covered by peeling and chipping brown-pink paint. There is no insulation and the wind blows easily through holes and cracks, especially at night. Each unit is elevated a foot off the ground and has two small windows on one side, some of which are broken and most of which are covered by pieces of old cardboard boxes. The ground around the camps is either deep mud or a dust storm waiting to be triggered by a passing car. During the day, the rusty tin roofs of the units conduct the sun's heat like an oven, regularly bringing the inside to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, the air is damp and cold, often below thirty-two Fahrenheit.

During the first and last phases of my fieldwork, I lived in a 10 by 12' unit that the farm calls a *cabina* [cabin] in the middle of the largest labor camp on the farm. It would be more appropriately called a "shack." Normally, a minimum of one family would share this sized shack. My shack had one old, damp, mattress with rust stains from the springs on which it rests, a tiny sink with dark orange-colored water from separate hot and a cold hoses, an old and smelly refrigerator, and a camping-style dual-burner gas stove. The bathrooms

and showers are shared in separate, large, plywood buildings with concrete floors. Shacks like these, where thousands of workers and their families live in the County, are most often hidden away from public view, in compounds behind the farm company's tree stands or behind other farm buildings.

Broadly, this paper explores ethnographically the interrelated ethnicity, labor, and suffering hierarchies in U.S. agriculture as well as the processes by which these become normalized and invisible. The exploration begins by uncovering the structure of farm labor, describing how agricultural work in the U.S. is segregated along an ethnicity-citizenship hierarchy. We will then see ethnographically that this pecking order produces correlated suffering and illness, particularly among the undocumented, indigenous Mexican pickers. Yet, it becomes clear that this injurious hierarchy is neither willed nor planned by the farm executives and managers; rather, it is a structural form of violence. Of note, these structures of inequality are only very rarely problematized by any group of people on the farm, even the most dominated. In the ethnographic data, we find that this structure becomes invisible via perceived bodily differences, including ethnic conceptions of pride. Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, we see that the taken-for-granted nature of these social and health asymmetries contribute to their justification and reproduction. The paper concludes with possibilities for "pragmatic solidarity" (Farmer 1999) and positive change.

THE TANAKA FARM

The Tanaka Brothers Farm is the largest farm in the Skagit Valley, employing some five hundred people in the peak of the picking season, late May through early November. During the winter and early spring, employment shrivels to some fifty or so workers. Of

note, the family farm is owned and run by third-generation Japanese-Americans whose parent's generation lost half of their land during the internment of the 1940s. The part of the family with hundreds of acres of land on Bainbridge Island near Seattle was interned suddenly and all their land was sold off by the government. The part of the family in the Skagit Valley had time to entrust their farm to an Anglo-American family with whom they were friends and thus avoided the same fate. Today, the farm is famous for strawberries, many from a variety bred by the father of those currently running the farm. The business is vertically integrated, consisting of everything from a plant and seed nursery to fruit and berry production and even a processing plant. However, most of the fruit and berries produced on the farm are sold under the label of larger companies. The farm consists of several thousand acres, much of the land visible to the west as one drives Interstate-5 through the valley. The majority of the land is made up of expansive rows of strawberry plants, although significant numbers of fields are dedicated to raspberries, apples, and organic and so-called "traditionally"-grown blueberries.

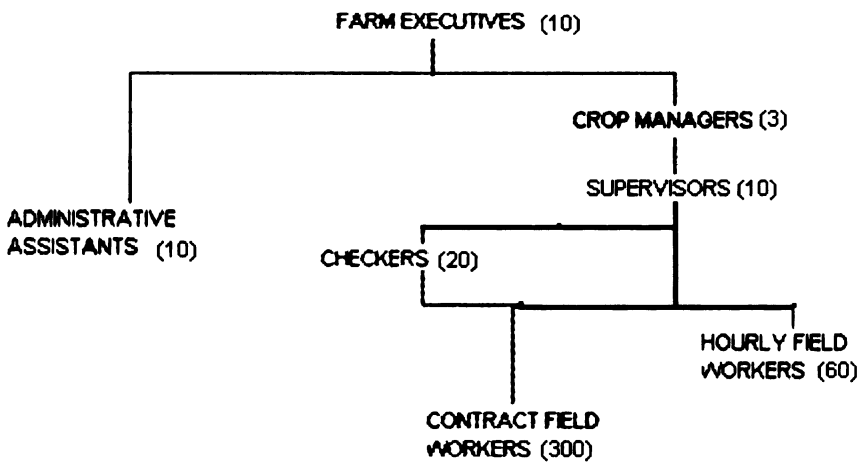
At the base of a forested hill on the farm, abutting one of the blueberry fields on nearly deserted Christensen Road, lies the largest migrant labor camp on the farm, housing some 250 male and female workers and their families every summer. Immediately above this camp, on Christensen Heights Road, is a group of five beautiful, large houses partially hidden by trees with floor-to-ceiling windows to capture the panorama of the picturesque valley. The other two labor camps are relatively hidden behind the large, warehouse-sized concrete processing plant and the farm headquarters. The one closest to the road houses about fifty year-round employees and the other, located a few hundred yards from the road, holds almost one hundred workers and their families in the summers. Diagonally across

from two of the labor camps and the concrete processing plant are the houses of some of the Tanaka family. The one most visible from the main road is a one-story brick house behind a large white, wooden fence, reminiscent of a small Jeffersonian plantation house. A public elementary school is directly across from the main entrance to these smaller two labor camps.

The Tanaka Farm advertises itself as "a family business spanning four generations with over 85 years experience in the small fruit industry." The farm's acknowledged business goal is to produce high quality fruit and sell it for profit. This farm specializes in berries with high taste content sold for use in dairy products (ice creams, yogurts, etc.) that use few or no preservatives, artificial flavors or colors. Their "Northwest variety" of strawberry is red throughout, with an incredible amount of tasty juice and a shelf life of minutes, distinct from the fresh-market "California variety" strawberries sold in grocery stores that are white in the middle with less flavorful juice and a much longer shelf life. Several of the Tanaka Farm's fields produce organic blueberries and are co-managed with and sold under the label of a large organic food producer. On a practical level, employees on the farm plant, grow, harvest, process, package, and sell berries, supporting the explicit goals of the company.

On another level, the structure of farm work inheres an intimate and complex segregation, a "de facto apartheid" (Bourgois 1995). After my first few weeks living in a migrant camp and picking berries, I began to notice the intricate structuring of labor on the farm. By the end of my fieldwork, it became unmistakable that farm labor was organized into a complicated hierarchy. The structure of labor is both determined by the asymmetries in society at large – specifically those organized around race, citizenship, and class – and reinforces those larger inequalities. The complex of farm labor includes several hundred

workers occupying many distinct positions from owner to receptionist, field manager to tractor driver, berry checker to berry picker. People at every level of the hierarchy often described it with vertical metaphors, speaking of those "above" or "below" them, of "overseeing," or of being at "the bottom." Responsibilities, anxieties, privileges, and experiences of time differ from the top to the bottom of this labor organization. The following chart roughly describes the farm's labor hierarchy.



In congruence with the vertical metaphors utilized by those on the farm, the remainder of this chapter will move from those considered at "the top" to those at "the bottom." These symbolic designations also correspond to those most visible from outside the farm to those least visible, respectively. Thus, the movement from "top" to "bottom" maps onto a progressive uncovering of the hidden social stratification of farm labor.

FARM EXECUTIVES

The third generation of Tanaka brothers makes up the majority of the top executives of the farm. The others are Anglo-American professionals brought in from other agricultural businesses. The following are abbreviated profiles of key farm executives, focusing on their

anxieties as well as their logics of profitability. In these profiles, we see the growers' worries that are centered around farm survival in a bleak landscape of competition in the midst of increasing agribusiness, expanding urban boundaries, and economic globalization. These concerns for survival are founded in the reality of ongoing closure of area farms sketched above.

Over the past two years of my dissertation research, many of my friends and family have wanted to blame the farm management for the living conditions of berry pickers. Many assumed that it is the fault of the growers that the pickers live and work in such poor conditions and that these growers could easily rectify the situation. This supposition is supported by other writings on farm workers, most of which describe the details of pickers' lives but leave out the perspectives of the growers.[1] The fact that the experiences of farm management are overlooked in these studies, inadvertently encourages readers' assumptions that growers are extremely wealthy, selfish, and inhuman.

The stark reality and precarious future of the farm described below remind us that the situation is much more complex. The corporatization of U.S. agriculture and the growth of international free markets squeeze growers such that they cannot easily imagine increasing the pay of the pickers or improving the labor camps without making the farm bankrupt. In other words, many of the largest inputs into the social suffering of farm workers are structural, not willed by individual agents. In this case, structural violence is enacted by market rule and later channeled by international and domestic racism, classism, sexism, and anti-immigrant sentiments.

[1] Rothenberg's *With These Hands* is a notable exception, including a thick ethnographic description of growers as well as pickers (1998).

The structural nature of the labor hierarchy comes into further relief when the hopes and values of the growers are considered. The Tanaka Farm executives are ethical, good people who want the best for their workers as well as their local community. They have a vision of a good society that includes family farming as well as opportunities for social advancement for all people. They want to treat their workers well as well as leave a legacy for their children and grandchildren. They are involved in Churches and non-profits working toward such hopes for society. Several of them wanted my opinions on how the labor camps could be improved for the workers. After a picker strike (described further below) in which explicit racist treatment of the pickers in the fields was brought to light, the growers were visibly surprised and upset. They promptly instructed all the crop managers to pass along the message to treat all workers with respect. Perhaps instead of blaming the growers, it is more appropriate to understand them as human beings doing the best they can in the midst of an unequal and harsh system.

Rob Tanaka is a bearded man of tall and strong stature as well as kind and gentle personality. He is responsible for the direct farming production of the business. He plans everything from planting to harvest and oversees those in charge of each crop. His office is located in a small house in the middle of the berry fields, several miles from the main offices. He spends the majority of his time in this office, though he also works via laptop in the small lounge of the main office building and visits the fields often. His primary concerns relate directly to farming (e.g. weather, insects and birds, soil quality, labor, etc.), though he is also concerned by competition and strategies for making a profit. Over several conversations in the small lounge in the main office building, Rob described to me his perspective and his work on the farm.

[Seth] "So what are the things that the farmer is most afraid of; what are the things that could cause the most problems?"

[Rob] "Well, I mean, for us, it is labor. I mean, it comes down to that we can grow the best crop there is, and if we don't have the people harvest, we're pretty well sunk. ...the other would be weather. There's flooding, freezing even. ... [A frost]'ll hit the—it kills the growing tips for your buds, so...you can lose anywhere from five to forty percent of your crop and it varies with all the crops we have.... You know, those are the two—you know—and regulations, then, somewhat. ...you know, regulatory issues which change your practice, you know...it usually picks the edge off and it goes to someone else. ...

I mean, it's also because of the urban growth, you know. There's going to be some battles, you know, for preserving farming if that's what one wants. I mean...if we planned on trying to farm and hand it down, and all of a sudden, here's all these buildings being built—you know...and we go "oh, wait a minute, I thought we were going to continue farming for another hundred years in the valley," and then the people go "well, you know, we need some housing for these people, and then we need the services, and then we need the—you know, the stores and the" and it's just—wherever the border is of the growth, and the guy who's running along on the other side of the fence is just waiting to sell because—uh—you know, it's all economics, and I understand that, I mean, would you rather have two hundred bucks or two hundred thousand, you know? ...how can farming compete with that? Especially when there's less—fewer crops to grow now, I mean as the processors move out, you know—and it's going offshore—all of production is going offshore where it is cheaper."

... Costs are up on everything, and really, the pricing hasn't gone that good, or, you know, it's pretty much stayed the same. ...in the old days, those were all separate companies or—you know, like the plant would be—the plant nursery people would sell to the farmer, and the farmer would sell to processor, and the processor would use a broker, you know.... Now, it's like where it's all in-house, and we hope that—do all of that, that there's enough where we can survive.

... So, there are a lot of worries that I have about expanding, any time we decide to do something bigger, then it's like "wow," you want to take this headache and make it [chuckles] that much bigger? Are you sure? ...you know, and then trying to look for the things of the future more for our kids and the next generation, and the future of the community....

So, the growing crop is the blueberries which has gained popularity through a pretty good marketing campaign, I guess, and it's just, uh—perceived as healthier—you know, health benefits of blueberries have really taken off in the last ten years...so that's boosted that up. ...if it wasn't for that, you know, I think we would be hurting."

[Seth] "And some of your blueberries are organic, joint with Organic Mountain Farms, right, like the ones by one of the camps?"

[Rob] "Yeah. And again, that's just to...spread the risks out.... ...we lowered our risk for the debt, but then the return isn't as great either, but hopefully it would be stable instead of doing this [moves his hands up and down], and if we dump everything else, it would provide steady income, just like—stock—you know, buying a pretty conservative mutual fund, versus speculating on a Tech stock. You know, and you look at it like we're creating a portfolio of crops. Some have more risk than others in different sectors, but it's the same thing. ... Apples—we were planning on taking twenty acres out—you know, this year, but um—it looks like we're going to make some money on it, so—"

[Seth] "Probably not [chuckle]."

[Rob] "Yeah."

Rob told me about a recent meeting of all the farm executives for which they had to read an article about being a "great company" or a "level five company." He said that every time he saw the word "great" all that he could see in the article was profitability to shareholders and he got mad and said "we already are a great company and if this is what being a great company means then I want to be a good company." He said that the farm is becoming more corporate and more bureaucratic and he is frustrated. He liked it more when

it was more a family business and he "didn't have to go through all these hoops to write a check." The above excerpts show us a farm owner concerned with creating an ethical family farm that can use "a portfolio of crops" to survive in difficult conditions in order to leave something for future generations.

Another of the farm's executives is Tom, a lean white man in his late forties brought in by the Tanaka family to be in charge of competing on the international small fruit market. Tom has an office in the trailer with the other executive offices, though he has taken more care to decorate than most of the others in the same building, proudly displaying a colorful painting of Chinese workers picking strawberries in China – the very place against which he is competing. Before joining the Tanaka Farm, Tom had been in charge of processing and marketing for a large Mexican strawberry producer. His job at the Tanaka Farm starts before sunrise, when he calls his competitors and potential buyers in Poland, China, and later Chile. Later in the day, he can take breaks to meet friends or eat out. He daily attempts to find a competitive advantage in diverse niche markets via changing the fruit grown in various fields to buying fruit from other farms to process and then sell. In his office at different times, Tom describes the stark competitive disadvantages of the farm in domestic and international terms.

> [Tom] "In Oregon, Washington, you have Totem [strawberry variety]...let's call it Pacific Northwest variety. ...California, the big one right now is Camerosa...primarily grown for the fresh market. California is for the preserve and for fresh, of course. That is where they make the big bucks. Preserves, fillings, juice concentrates, like pop tarts, jellies, anytime you get strawberry as a sweetener, food science related stuff. ... This is kind-of my enemy over here, food science. They are taking not a very flavorful strawberry—you have tasted the Camerosa. It's not very flavorful. It is white in the center. It dissolves pretty easily if you cook it down.

What they try to do is they add sugar, fructose, sweeteners and coloring agents to stretch that strawberry out. So you are taking a very cheap strawberry, adding things to it and then stretching it out. So, when you taste a pop tart, you are tasting something sweet that might be reminiscent of a strawberry. Pacific Northwest variety is for dairy. The primary market I go after...would be like yogurt, and ice cream. ...That is because the strawberry itself in its natural form has to carry the product. Pacific Northwest is red throughout. So, like Haagen Dazs for example, if you look at the ice cream...you are going to see vanilla, cream, sugar, strawberry. If you buy one from California, you are going to find emulsifiers; there could be like twenty of them."

[Seth] "So, why isn't Pacific Northwest more fresh market?"

[Tom] "Because you cannot ship them across the street...you can hardly get them to Seattle. You see how they arrive here, the juice dripping off. California, I ship them from Oxnard and that is forty hours and they arrive in better condition than when we see our fruit on the plant in the farm. ...It is a dream to run; they are like potatoes; they are rock hard. I compete primarily with Poland because their variety is closest to what we are doing up here. If Poland has a short crop, I have moved products to France for Haagen Dazs Europe. Chile, that is more a California type. China is more of a California type. In the last year, they introduced Totem into China, so that is our next major threat.

... I think that the competitive disadvantages that we have is not just Northwest versus California, I think just the US strawberry industry as a whole has problems. We are forced to do total trace-ability back to the farm to make sure that we are not over-spraying. Whereas in China, they cannot do that.

I am not an optimist on the Northwest, you know the future. It is an expensive berry. For example, if you talk to a grower here, they are going to tell you they want fifty cents a pound basically in a field. I can buy finished product landed here form China, grade A frozen for probably forty cents a pound. That is why they are paying [research and development] people eighty thousand bucks a year to make it stretch. ...It comes down to economics. So, I am just hanging on to a totally shrinking customer base. ...a half a million pound buyer walked away earlier this year. They

went to Chile. I can't blame them; it's just the way it is. ... I just hope that Haagen Dazs keeps buying."

Tom paints a stark picture of the effects of free markets in the midst of large economic inequalities. He daily worries about competition with the California variety of berries along with the stretching of its flavor via food science. He is also concerned by berry production in other countries, especially China. Though Tom is dedicated to his job, working starting before the sun rises, he does not have much hope for the future of berry farms in the Pacific Northwest.

The current farm president, John Tanaka, is the second oldest of the brothers in his late 50's. After growing up on the farm and going to college, he joined the military. After working as an army officer for twenty-six years, John returned to the farm and became its president. John has the sharp, narrow features and quick speech patterns one might expect of a military officer along with the ability to maneuver his words through controversial issues one might expect of a business or political leader. His job is partially to interact with the community in such a way as to produce as positive a view of the farm as possible. Toward this goal, he headed up the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, met with several community groups interested in farming practices, and even ran for the County Council.

The main part of his job, however, is to oversee all the operations of the farm in such a way as to ensure profitability. John's schedule is influenced by weather, the rate of growth of plants, the schedules of community groups, the schedule of berry markets, and the amount of time workers will work before striking. He begins his work days usually before 6am, takes a break in the middle of the day to work out at a nearby gym with his wife, and comes back to work until the late afternoon. Most of his time is spent indoors behind his desk, though he also visits the fields from time to time to see how things are going and to make his

presence known. He believes that the farm workers like the fact that he comes to the fields and they see him regularly. His daily worries orbit around profitability with its various variables from weather to bird activity, market price to labor crew retention. Over several conversations, John explained to me the difficulties of his job attempting to manage all the variables that play into the business side of the farm. Sitting behind his desk in his private office in the trailer that functions as the headquarters of the farm, John elaborated on some of the difficulties of farming while working to preserve the business for future generations.

> "And it's different than other businesses, where you grow a business and then—sell out, or—you know—you reach a certain profit level that you're comfortable with. In our business, we grow it for the next generation. Which means that when I retire, you know, I can't pull dollars out of the company, because it would leave—the next generation with a big gap, and so we know that, and that's what we focus on."

During my second summer in the Skagit Valley, John Tanaka agreed to a conversation with several interested area residents organized by a local church-related non-profit working with migrant laborers, an encounter introduced further in a later chapter. The conversation took place in a conference room in the farm's processing plant overlooking the processing plant assembly-line workers with their yellow rubber aprons and hairnet caps. John Tanaka took questions from the primarily White audience of twenty-some people while the answers were translated into Spanish for the two Spanish-speaking area residents who had attended. Here, he explains some specific ways in which economic competition relates to the living conditions of workers. In addition, he touches on the generational and ethnic succession of laborers in farm work.

> [John Tanaka] "The challenge for us at a management level is that we have got to maintain our fair share of the market.... Well, the difference is that in South

Carolina, they have federal minimum wages, which is 5.75 an hour. In Washington, I'm paying a picker 7.16, the State minimum wage. Competing in the same market. That's a huge difference. Huge difference. Well, it creates a challenge for a farmer.... I would say the largest challenge for survival...I don't like to use the word "survival," but—but I'll use it—is probably offshore competition. For example, China. They could take a strawberry and bring it to—uh—San Francisco and deliver it to a restaurant cheaper than we can. And a lot cheaper to bring it to Japan. We pay—7.16 an hour. In most countries that we're talking about here, whether it be China or Chile or wherever, they don't pay that a day!

Now, the other side of that—you know, this off-shore issue—I mean, that's a big issue to us—but the other side of that is a labor issue. Clearly. That's the next—probably the largest issue that faces agriculture today. And—you know—right now, we feel comfortable—today—with the labor forces that we have and that we—we believe are available to us. But—as we look into the future, I think that's going to be a problem. And—what we're looking at is—is that either we have to find a way to do what we do today with machines. Or—we've got to be able to find the right kind of labor market that will keep providing us that labor force that we're going to need—to harvest our crops. I think it's a multi-dimensional issue; what happens is that the first generation comes over and they're willing to work in the fields—but the next generation—they're schooled here, and they don't quite see the same passion for working in the fields."

[Female area resident] "Fourteen dollars an hour for putting up drywall starts to look good (laughs)."

[John Tanaka] "Well—but—but given education and other opportunities, they do other things—which is fine. I don't have any problem—I mean, our family did the same thing.

But, through my personal history, I mean, I go back into the '40's and we've seen Canadian Indians, we've seen the—Hispanics not out of Mexico, but in the—you know, inside of Eastern Washington and Oregon, California, Texas—you know, that—that was the first part. And then we saw the—uh—Cambodians—the Vietnamese, then we started to see the migration of—you know—the Hispanics out

of Mexico. And then they went further. They went out of the—out of the state of Oaxaca, where a lot of them come from today. And all of those—what you see is that same generational trend; the first generation works in the fields, a lot of them stay with you, the next generation, fewer of them stay with you, and more of them are educated and do other things. It is my belief that once any particular group of people go through a three generation move, they'll no longer be in agriculture. Unless they own the farm and are running it themselves."

In the last section, John Tanaka seems to recognize that the living conditions of pickers are so undesirable that each group moves out of this position as quickly as possible. In addition, he describes how the pickers come from the most vulnerable populations at any given time. As each group advances economically, a more exploited and oppressed group comes to take their place.

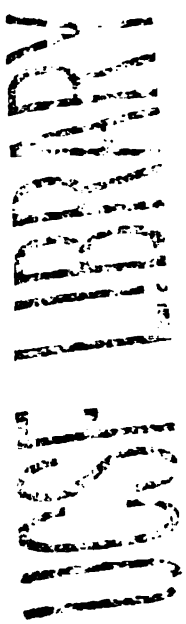
The farm executives are anxious to ensure the survival of the farm for future generations in the midst of bleak agricultural and economic trends. They top work long days, worrying about many variables only partially within their control and doing their best to run an ethical business that treats its workers well. They also have a fair amount of control of their schedules. They take breaks when they choose to eat or work out, to talk on the phone or meet with a friend. They have comfortable houses and financial security, private and clean indoor bathrooms and kitchens, insulation and heating, as well as quiet. In addition, they have private indoor offices with phones and computers as well as employees "under them" (as they state) to take care of the tasks considered more boring.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Most of the administrative assistants are White, though there are a few Latino U.S. Citizens. They are all female. They work sitting at desks in open spaces without privacy.

They are in charge of reception, interacting with both Anglo-American local residents and other businesses as well as with Mexican farm workers. The following are abbreviated profiles of three important administrative workers.

Sally is the year-round front desk receptionist. She is a lean White woman of approximately forty years old often with a smile on her face. She has lived her whole life in the same town as the farm and currently lives with her husband and children in a small family house. The reception desk used to face away from the front counter such that workers or others entering approached the receptionist's back. Sally tries to treat the workers well and turning around the desk when she first arrived was one step in this direction. She has helped arrange loans for the Mexican farm workers in the past when the picking date was moved back and the workers were living out of their cars, waiting without money or food. Crew bosses and farm executives regularly reprimand her for being too nice to the workers. She has been told to be "more curt" and "quick," "less friendly." In addition, she feels disrespected by the people "above her" (as she states), treated like a "peon." They often give her advice on how to do her work and give her jobs to do without the common courtesies of "please" or "thank you."



Samantha is a White, bilingual administrative assistant brought in two summers ago to help work with Spanish speaking employees. Prior to working here, she was a travel agent. She lives alone on a small plot of land with her farm animals. Her desk is located in the hallway between the main entrance and the private offices of the farm executives. Her first encounter with indigenous Mexicans was on this farm and she had many troubling things to say about them (see especially Chapter Four).

Maria is a thirty-year old bilingual Latina woman approximately thirty years old from Texas. Her great-grandparents moved to the U.S. from Mexico. She works May through November in a number of roles. She lives in one of the year-round shacks that are insulated and have heat in the nearest labor camp. She works some of the time at the front desk with Sally, some of the time in the portable unit where Spanish-speaking pickers can ask questions and pick up mail during afternoon hours. On Fridays, she works in the wooden shed where paychecks are passed out to workers in a long line. Her first few summer at the farm, while she was seven months pregnant, she picked berries and worked with a hoe. After four years with the hoe, she was moved up to desk work due partially to her ability to speak English fluently. Like Samantha, she first heard of and met indigenous Mexican people on the farm. She explained her work to me while we sat in the portable, occasionally interrupted by a picker seeking their mail.

> "I am pretty easy to get along with, I guess that is why I have been in the office for five years. I try to help these people—like a guy just came about his tickets. I can get in trouble if I do anything with those tickets because it is not my job it is not my duty. But, I tend to do it because I understand them, because I started out just as they did I started out at the bottom.
>
> This season was wild and busy; last week I worked one hundred and eight hours. And then trying to get answers to [the pickers]; sometimes you can't get an answer to them and then you try asking for answers somewhere and then you get all this run-around. One of the Tanakas is really helpful and if I have a problem I will go to him right away and he tends to listen and he is pretty understanding."

The administrative assistants are responsible for completing tasks for the farm executives, providing a cheerful face to those outside the farm while managing sternly those within, as well as making clear to those "above them" (as they say) their relative position in the pecking order. These employees work between six and seven days a week indoors at

desks without privacy and answer frequent phone calls that distract them from their other tasks. They worry about the moods and opinions of those "above them." They are paid minimum wage without overtime, since agriculture falls outside of U.S. overtime labor laws. They have lunch breaks and can take breaks to use the bathroom as long as there is not someone from outside the farm needing direct help at that moment.

CROP MANAGERS

The crop managers are in charge of all the details related to the efficient production of a specific crop, from field plowing to planting, pruning to spraying, picking to delivery to the processing plant. They have private offices in the field house found on Benson Road in the middle of the blueberry and strawberry fields close to the largest labor camp, though they spend a fair amount of time walking through the fields overseeing. During the harvest, they begin their days, seven days a week, by 5AM most days and finish in the early evening. They can take a break when they choose to eat, run errands, or go quickly home. The crop managers worry about the availability of machinery, the effects of the weather on the crops, and the docility of their labor force. They have control over how much the pickers are paid, though they have several field bosses below them to enforce their directions.

Jeff is a white man about thirty years old who recently graduated from a university in California where he studied agricultural marketing. He is in charge of the blueberries. Jeff told me about his job as he drove around in his big white pick-up truck with two large dogs in the back. We drove to an agriculture store and bought large concrete drains to take to a blueberry field as well as to Costco to buy tri-tip steaks for a potluck dinner he was going to with his church.

He explained the several different tasks going on contemporaneously in the raspberry fields to help me understand how many things a crop manager has to oversee at one time. The thing that causes him the most anxiety is having multiple bosses on a family farm without a strict chain of command. He also worries about weather and harvest crews. Regarding the picking crews, he told me, "It is what it is—you know, sometimes people walk out and sometimes people pick, and—it's kind of like the weather, you can't really predict it and you don't really have control over it, but usually it ends up working out all right." He explained that "we make the prices fair, so if the crew walks out [on strike], we just say 'hey, we'll be here tomorrow' and that's the way it is. They can come back if they want." He told me that all the people who sit on the raspberry machines are Latinos from Texas whereas all those who pick blueberries are "O-hacan", though he also told me that he can't really tell the difference. That week, Jeff was in the midst of budgeting for next year, trying to predict what kind of yield he would have. He tries to predict based on bud count; for each fruit bud in the Fall, he expects seven berries the following summer. Though, a freeze could make the fruit smaller or even kill the buds altogether.

Scott is a tall, thin, middle-aged white man who came to the Tanaka farm from a larger apple farm in Eastern Washington. He is in charge of the strawberry, raspberry, and apple crops. He spoke with me in his private office in the field house as well as in the fields as I picked strawberries and he walked around talking with people and eating berries. He explained to me the difference in number of workers on the farm in the summer – approximately five hundred – and in the winter – about eighty – and what is done in the different seasons. His primary worries relate to managing the labor force, "which is sometimes pretty overwhelming," he told me in his office.

[Seth] "What are the anxieties—what things worry you as crop operations manager?"

[Scott] "Numerous [laughing]. It kind of goes just from the time of the year and—you know, the crop that I'm actually pushing on. You know, that damn near changes daily. Once we get closer to harvest, probably the big push is watching to see the camps start to fill up. You know, you're always concerned—um—'am I going to get enough pickers?' The concern's not really that I have too many, it's always 'will I get enough?' You know, once I see that we have 300+ guys living in the camp, then that starts to ease down a little bit, and I can pick the strawberries with 300 guys, but 350's a lot nicer. You get up to 400, then you're teetering on the—you know—concerned about getting too many guys. It's just, when you start looking at the guys, you know, and now they're only getting to come out and work four hours a day, you know. You get 400 guys out in the field, you go through the field pretty quick, and so we try to keep it between that 350 and 400, which gives everybody a good day's work. It's not too long, but it's not too short. You know, they can go out and make decent enough money and feel—you know, once they get back to camp, even if it's 2:00 in the afternoon, they got a good day's work in, they've—they've made their wages, and get plenty of time to rest up for the next day. And uh—the other crops, they just kind of fall into place. If strawberries goes well, then everything else just kind of falls into place."

But, uh—we couldn't do it, you know, without the people that come and do it for us, so—you know—the labor issues we had this year [the last chapter will deal further with this strike] it was a big deal, I mean, it was a worry. Tanaka's—since I've worked here, I've gotten to know some of them, you know, they want to treat everybody right. That's a big push for them, and so when that kind of thing happens, you know, they've really stepped back to take a look at who's doing what—exactly what's going on. But you'll always—almost always find a Tanaka during harvest out in the field at some time or another, they're still real hands-on."

[Seth] "Yeah. That's—that's different from other farms you've seen?"

[Scott] "Oh yeah. Yeah. Eastern Washington—the farm over there that I ran, I had 150 acres of land. I'd only see the guy who owned it twice a year. You know,

so—I mean it was a big—big change to come over here and the guy that owns the farm is out there working on the site. I think—I think it's good for morale all the way around, you know, and that's—you know—that's just Tanaka's work ethic. They're—they're real hands-on people. If you're out there working 14 hours, seven days a week, so are they—and—you know, usually they're working more than anybody else. You'll see John coming in at 3:00 in the morning, and you know—he might be there until 7, 8, 9:00 at night. Daylight to dark, it's just the nature of farming.

There is a lot of talk today about immigration and the border and stuff like that. ...you know, on the grower's side and on the worker's side—you know, they—they end up spending a whole lot of money to get up here to work, you know, and so—I think we should tell the politicians, you know, even if it's not popular or whatever, there's a lot of need that they have to work there. That's a given."

After I turned off my tape recorder, Scott wanted to hear more about my interest in crossing the border with some of the Triqui workers. First, he told me I should get permission from the federal government. Later, he changed his mind and said that the problem with that would be that the government would ask for all my information about where I crossed and what the route was. He was afraid the government would then shut down that route "and we wouldn't have any workers anymore." He explained that well over ninety percent of the pickers are undocumented.

The profiles of the crop managers bring into focus the practical attempts from the management to run a good, ethical farm in the midst of difficult conditions. In addition, Scott is clearly concerned about the direct effects of immigration and border policies on his labor force. Like many farmers I have interviewed, he knows that U.S. farming would be impossible without undocumented Latin American migrant workers.

FIELD BOSSES

Several field bosses work for each crop manager and are, in turn, in charge of several crews of pickers. They are all white or members of the fourth-generation of the Tanaka family who either live locally in their own homes or come seasonally from other areas. They are in charge of making sure the crew bosses and checkers are getting people to pick quickly and without too many berries. Some field bosses are in charge of what are called "Mexican crews" and others are in charge of the "local crews" of white teenage pickers. The field bosses of Mexican crews work all day outside walking and supervising, giving directions and reprimands. The one field boss of the local white crew has her own private office in the main building of the farm, though she spends some time out in the fields supervising.

Shelly is a shorter white woman in her early forties. She started working on the local picking crew when she was seven years old, worked in the office as an administrative assistant after college, ended up marrying Rob Tanaka, and now is the field boss for the local white teenage crews and checkers. She sees the local crew as serving the purposes of inculcating a value for agriculture in local families as well as teaching white teenagers to respect diversity. However, it turns out the perceptions and outlooks of the white pickers and checkers is much more complicated and potentially negative (see below and Chapter Four). Shelly misses the days when mestizo Mexicans, whom she calls "traditional Mexicans," were the pickers on the farm and she seems fed up with the Oaxacan pickers. She considers the Oaxacans more "dirty," "less respectful," less work-, less family-, and less community-oriented (inter-ethnic perceptions will be discussed further in the Chapter Four).

Mike Tanaka is the son of John Tanaka and the oldest member of the fourth generation of the family. John is grooming him to gain more responsibility on the farm. Though he is not exactly a field boss, Mike seems to have more respect and power than the

supervisors and less than the crop managers. He is in charge of the labor camps and any labor issues – including violence – that may arise. He is also the farm's representative to the county's chamber of commerce. He has worked on the farm most of his life from picker to checker and manager. He explained to me that the Oaxacan people are less open than mestizo Mexicans, whom he calls "regular Mexicans." Yet, he feels that he is gaining trust. He elaborated, "Typically my first couple of years when I was in charge of the camps, the only time I would know there was a problems was when the cops were calling me. Now the Oaxacans in the camp usually catch me at night or they come to my house and say, 'hey look this is going on and we thought you might want to know.' I am really glad about it cause it gives me a little more insight to how to make the camps better and safer for the people."

Mike works seven days a week except during the fall when he is in California. He explains that in California farms are required to pay overtime if anyone works over six days a week. In Washington, there is no such regulation. He believes he will have more responsibilities in the future and hopes that his children will be able to work on the farm as well. He explains his goals working with the pickers, "fair and consistent is what we are going for; without one of those, you don't have a leg to stand on. I hope we keep in touch with out community, both migrant and stationary. I would hope personally that I maintain my touch with people, that they view me as a fair person...."

Abby is a bilingual field boss of one of the Mexican crews. She grew up in Washington State and married a Latino man from Texas who also works on the farm. They spend February through November on the Tanaka farm and have two months off in Mexico each year. Abby is the only white person, besides myself, living in a labor camp. She lives with her Latino family in one of the year-round, insulated units. Several people on the farm

were confused about her ethnicity. Some said she was "Hispanic" and some said "she seems Hispanic, but is actually white." This ethnicity confusion relates to the fact that Abby's speaking Spanish and living in the labor camp break with implicit hierarchies on the farm. At the same time, her position as field boss fits within the labor possibilities of her ethnicity. In addition to bringing into relief the de facto apartheid on the farm, the profiles of the field bosses exemplify once again the attempt to be a good boss in the midst of an unequal system.

SUPERVISORS

Several supervisors, called "crew bosses," work for each field boss. They are each in charge of a crew of approximately ten to twenty pickers. They walk through the rows, inspecting and telling workers to pick faster and more carefully. The crew bosses are constantly under supervision from the field bosses, though they can take short breaks to go to the bathroom and they often carry on light-hearted conversations with co-workers. All the crew bosses are U.S. Latino people, with a few mestizo Mexicans and one Mixteco Oaxacan as well. They live in the insulated year-round labor camp. Some of the crew bosses call the Oaxacan workers by derogatory and racist names. The crew boss most often accused by pickers of such racist treatment has a daughter, Barbara, who is also a crew boss.

Barbara is a bilingual Latina in her early twenties from Texas who has been working at the farm during the harvest for eleven years. She attends a community college in Texas every Spring and hopes to finish undergraduate studies in eight years to become a history teacher. She is upset that other crew bosses call Oaxacan people "pinche Oaxaco," or "Indio estupido." She explains to me that the Oaxacans are afraid to complain or demand better working conditions because they do not want to lose their jobs. She sees the farm policy that

if someone is fired by one crew boss they can never be hired by anyone else on the farm as unfair. "I think there should be checks and balances, you know, like a president. This isn't Cuba, you know, it's not a dictatorship," she explained. "It's unfair." Her family has learned English in Texas as well as in the farm-sponsored English classes that take place each night after work and are open to anyone who is not a picker. This farm policy, for which no member of the management could give a reason, inadvertently functions to shore up segregation on the farm.

Mateo is a twenty-nine year old Mixteco father of two young children. He has been working on the Tanaka farm for a dozen years and taking English classes for five years. He came from a family with enough money to allow him to finish high school in Oaxaca before emigrating. He is fluent in Mixteco Alto, Spanish and speaks somewhat broken English. He is the only Oaxacan person I met on the farm who speaks English. He is also the only Oaxacan with a job higher on the hierarchy than picker. He oversees pickers in the strawberry and blueberry harvests. He hopes to continue studying English and being promoted on the farm until he can "work with his mind instead of his body" (*trabajar con la mente en vez del cuerpo,*this will be discussed further in Chapter Four)." Mateo worries about the pregnant women in his crew picking long hard days and being in such close contact with pesticide-covered plants. He explained that many give birth prematurely and he believes this to be due to the difficulty of their work. He also worries about the low pay of the pickers since the pay for strawberries per pound has only gone up a few cents in a decade and the pay for blueberries has actually gone down in the last several years.

Barbara and Mateo once again manifest the desire to treat workers well even though the structures within which they work are "unfair," as they say. Many other crew bosses,

who were rumored to be more blatantly racist, were not interested in being interviewed. Mateo's position as the only Oaxacan crew boss shows the importance of the ability to study and speak English in order to be promoted.

CHECKERS

Local white teenagers punch the beginning and ending times on each picker's daily work cards as well as punch in the weights of each bucket of berries brought in by each picker on these same cards. They also check to make sure the berries brought in are ripe enough without being rotten and without having leaves attached. They sit or stand in the shade of overhead umbrellas or in the sunshine as they gossip, talk and laugh with each other. They speak English with an occasional Spanish word to the pickers. Some regularly hurl English expletives – and the occasional berry – at the pickers often old enough to be their parents. Some speak of the Mexican pickers as "grease heads" and joke about them driving low-riders, which there were, incidentally, none of in the labor camp parking lots. The following tape-recorded field note excerpt describes the checking stations during one day of picking.

> "There were different stations where you could have your berries weighed. The first station I went to had three people, and they were slow. They weren't mean, they weren't really nice, they were just kind of slow and unorganized, which was frustrating, because they were taking away my time to get more pounds. And I might not get the minimum weight for the day because they were slow. On top of that, even though my berries weighed twenty-eight pounds, I was marked for twenty-six. The next place I went to weigh my berries, there was somebody teaching someone else how to do it, 'if you see more than ten green stems when you look at the berries, take them out throw out the bad berries, you've got to look through the berries that are underneath, too, because sometimes they try to hide the bad berries.' I was thinking

to myself, 'you don't have time to try to hide anything, you just go, you do it as fast as you can!' The next place I went, there was a girl and the one Chicano guy. And the Chicano guy didn't talk, he just moved berries back and forth, and the girl was weighing really fast and I liked how fast they were. The next place I went, they seemed kind of rude to people—throwing berries out in a disrespectful way. Throwing berries out, looking at people, telling them 'no!' not speaking Spanish enough to explain what they meant by 'no,' and just refusing to weigh the bucket of berries."

The first day I picked during my second summer on the farm, a white, female college student came up to me and said, "so, I hear you are writing a book." Laura grew up in the area and worked assigning rows to the pickers and checking their I.D. badges to make sure they were working full days. She is studying Spanish in college in the Seattle area and likes to talk with and learn about the lives of the pickers. She has been very frustrated with the way Shelly sees the Mexican pickers. She explained, "one day we were walking back to the cars, one girl was talking to one of the pickers practicing her Spanish or something. I don't know if they were even talking to each other but Shelly said something to her like she didn't want her to talk to pickers. It is like she doesn't trust them. She gets frazzled a lot. I was surprised, I was like, 'why didn't she want you to talk to them?'"

Though the higher farm management sees the employment of white teenagers as checkers to be developing positive values toward agriculture and diversity, it seems the checkers also learn that they deserve to have power over Mexicans who are often old enough to be their parents or even grandparents. They are paid minimum wage while being allowed to gossip and sit at the same time that the pickers have to kneel constantly and work as fast as possible in order to keep their jobs. The white checkers are given power over how many pounds are marked for the pickers. They are also allowed to treat the pickers as people who

do not deserve equal respect. This experience serves to further develop the lenses through which symbolic violence, the naturalization of inequality, is effected. In addition, Laura points out that the farm management sometimes works directly to keep labor positions and ethnicities segregated.

HOURLY FIELD WORKERS

There are several small groups of field workers who are paid per hour. All live in the seasonal labor camps and work seven days a week from about five in the morning until the late afternoon or later. There are approximately a dozen men, mostly mestizo Mexican along with a few Mixteco Oaxacans, who drive tractors between the fields and the farm's processing building. The tractors carry stacks of berry containers several feet high and the drivers are exposed all day to direct sunshine or rain. There are other groups of mostly mestizo Mexican men and women working with a handful of Mixtecos in other capacities from tying off the new growth from raspberries to covering blueberry bushes with plastic, from spraying chemical or concentrated vinegar (for the organic fields) pesticides to using the hoes in between roes of plants.

Thirty-some raspberry pickers work twelve to eighteen hours a day, seven days a week for approximately a month. There are either two or three workers on each raspberry harvester. This machine is approximately one story tall, bright yellow, and shaped like an upside down "U" tall enough for the row of raspberry bushes to pass beneath it's middle. The machine shakes the bushes enough that the ripe berries fall onto a conveyor belt and are then moved to crates, and remove bad berries and leaves. One worker drives the machine, the others move the full and empty berry crates. They are all seated and have minimal shade

from umbrellas attached to the machine. All the raspberry pickers are Latinos from Texas, most relatives of the field boss of raspberries.

PICKERS PAID BY WEIGHT: "THE WHITE CREW"

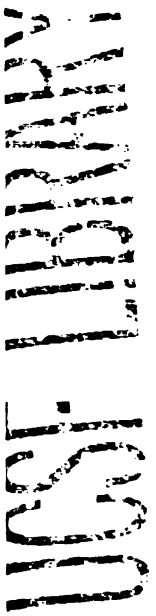
The white teen pickers are paid per pound of berries, but because they are under 16 years old, they have no minimum weight to meet each day. They live in the rather comfortable houses of their parents. They work bent over six days a week, though they have no time pressure and take frequent breaks. Sometimes, their parents help pick into their buckets for part of the day. They are treated well and cheerfully by their field boss, Shelly. Some of them hope to be promoted to the level of a checker, while others decide they do not like manual labor and decide to stop working at the farm at the end of the season. They complain of knee and hip pain as well as not getting to play with their friends instead of working. The knee and hip pain is, as a rule, temporary since these workers not only take breaks from bending, but also work picking only a few summers maximum.

PICKERS PAID BY WEIGHT: "THE MEXICAN CREW"

The contract pickers, often referred to simply as "farm workers," are made up almost entirely of Triquis, though there are a handful of Mixtecos as well. There are men and women and children – agricultural workers can legally be fourteen years old or older – working in the berry fields. Most live in the camp furthest from the farm headquarters and some live in the second furthest camp. Pickers make up the only group of laborers not paid by the hour. Instead they are considered "contract workers," working with a contract to be paid a certain amount per unit of fruit harvested. They are told a minimum amount of fruit to

pick each day. If they pick less than this, they will be fired and kicked out of the camp. The first contract picker I met, a Triqui man named Abelino, explained, "the hourly jobs, the salaried jobs are better because you can count on how much you will make. But, they don't give those jobs to us."

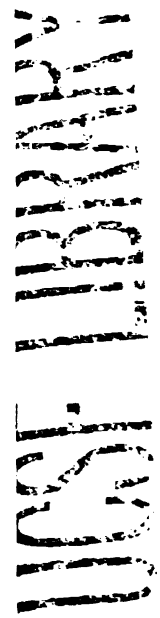
Approximately twenty-five people, mostly mestizo Mexican with a few Mixteco and Triqui people, pick apples. The field boss, Abby, explained to me that picking apples is the hardest job on the farm. Apple pickers work five to ten hours a day, seven days a week, carrying a heavy bag of apples over their shoulders. They repeatedly climb up and down ladders to reach the apples. This job is also known to be the highest paid picking position, and thus is well sought after.



However, the majority – 350 to 400 – of pickers work in the strawberry fields for a month, followed by three months in the blueberry fields. They are made up almost entirely of Triqui men, women and children, along with a handful of Mixtecos. Most pickers come with other family members. The official contract for strawberry pickers is fourteen cents per pound of strawberries. This means that pickers must bring in 51lbs of de-leafed strawberries every hour because Washington state minimum wage is $7.16 and the farm is required to pay at least minimum wage. In order to meet this minimum, pickers take few or no breaks from 5AM until the afternoon when that field is completed. Often, they are reprimanded nonetheless and called *perros* (dogs), *burros* (burros), Oaxacos, *indios estupidos* (stupid Indians). Many do not eat or drink anything before work so they do not have to take time to use the bathroom. They work as hard and fast as they can, arms flying in the air as they kneel in the dirt, picking and running with their buckets of berries to the checkers. At the same time, the word "contract" is misleading in that the pay per unit is changed by the crop

managers without warning or any opportunity negotiation or even consent on the part of the pickers.

Strawberry pickers pick simultaneously with both hands in order to make the minimum. They are required to pop off the green stem and leaves from each individual strawberry as well as avoid the green and the rotten berries. During my fieldwork, I picked once or twice a week and experienced gastritis, headaches, as well as knee, back, and hip pain for days afterward. I wrote in a field note after picking, "it honestly felt like pure torture." Triqui strawberry pickers worked seven days a week, rain or shine, without a day off until the last strawberry was processed. Occupying the bottom of the ethnic-labor hierarchy, Triqui strawberry pickers bear an unequal share of health problems, from idiopathic back and knee pains to slipped vertebral disks, from diabetes type II to premature births and developmental malformations (social suffering forms the central topic of the next chapter).



All the Triqui workers on this particular farm are from one small hometown, San Miguel, located in the mountains of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. The descriptions below highlight the economic and physical hardships of the pickers on the farm as well as on the U.S.-Mexico border. They also touch on the importance of language, ethnicity, and education in the organization of the farm labor hierarchy. Again, we see the theme of the importance of immigration and border policies for farming and farm workers.

Marcelina is a twenty-eight year-old Triqui mother of two. A Skagit county non-profit organized a seminar on farm labor for which I invited Marcelina to speak about her experiences migrating and picking. Shyly, she approached the translator, holding her one year-old daughter.

"Yes, good afternoon. I am Marcelina. Thank you very much. [To her daughter] tell them your name.

I come here to the United States to work. A man left me with two children. One wants to come here to make money, but no. I don't even make enough to send to Oaxaca to my Mom who is taking care of my son there. Sometimes the strawberry goes poorly, your back hurts, and you don't make anything.

I am sorry, I can't—the truth—almost don't speak Spanish well. Pure Triqui. [Chuckles] Pure Triqui.

But, it is very difficult here—one goes along solo here, [the farm camp manager] doesn't want to give a room to a single woman—that's how they are. So, I am living with this family over here [pointing to a Triqui family of five in the audience]. One gains nothing here—nothing to survive. Besides that, I have a daughter here [looking at her daughter] with me and I don't make anything to give—working and working—nothing. I have been here four years—and nothing. Four years.

It is very difficult for a person here. I came to make money, like I thought, 'here on the other side [of the border]—there is money—and good money'—but no. We're not able to make enough to survive.

And then sometimes [the checkers] steal pounds. Sometimes rotten berries make it into the bucket—'Eat that one!' they say, throwing it into your face—they don't work well. And there are hardly any good ones, pure rotten ones.

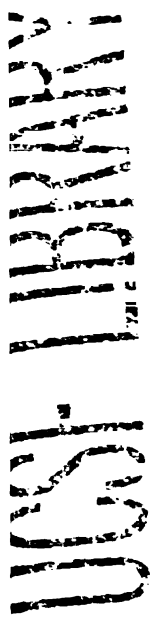
This is not good...you don't make enough even to eat. I have two children and it is very ugly here, very ugly to work in the field. That's how it is. Sometimes you want to speak up, but no. You can't speak to them.

There in Oaxaca, we don't have work—there are no jobs there. Only the men work sometimes, but since there are many children in my family, the men don't make money for me and my son. That's why I wanted to come here—to make money, but no—no—no, you don't make anything here; you don't have anything to survive. I wanted to work, to move ahead [*salir adelante*] with my children, to take them ahead [*salir adelante*].

I have been here four years without seeing my son.

In California, there is no work—just pruning and you don't make any money—because of the same thing, that we don't know Spanish, and that is because we don't have enough money to study. Parents have to suffer in order to send their children to school, to buy food and the school uniforms. I have lots of sisters back there, studying, like I couldn't study. There are many children who do not go to school because they lack money. I had to leave Oaxaca so I wouldn't suffer from hunger and I hoped I would make enough to send back to support my sisters in school. I had to give up school myself."

One of the Triqui families that welcomed me most into their lives was made up of Samuel, his wife Leticia, and his four year-old son. In Madera, CA, I shared a three-bedroom, one bath slum apartment with Marcelina and her daughter, Samuel, his wife and son, Samuel's sister and her son, Samuel's brother, his wife and daughter, as well as two other families of three. One night, while we watched an English-language Jet Li action movie with the sound turned down and drank blue cool-aid, Samuel told me about what he commonly calls "how the poor suffer (*como sufren los pobres*)."



[Samuel] Here with Tanaka, we come, we don't have to pay rent, but they don't pay us well; they pay 14 cents a pound. ...the people, they're making 30, 40 dollars a day. And they take also the taxes, federal taxes, social security. They pay 20 dollars a day."

Later, he continues, "They don't pay fairly. ...if a person has thirty-four pounds of strawberries, four pounds are stolen because the checker marks only thirty. It is not just. That is what bothers people the most. And people work a lot. They suffer; humans suffer.... And I don't know – it is easy for them but for us it is not.

In the blueberries, they pay us very little, they take the ounce from the boxes and that is why the people can't move ahead. We pick a lot of fruit and we don't make money. And the people don't say anything; they are afraid of speaking, because afterwards the farm will fire them. You speak and you are kicked off the farm.

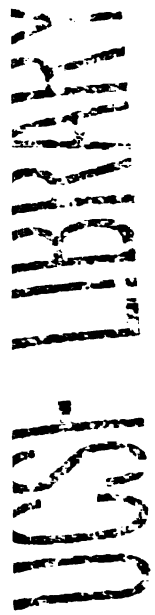
We want to say things to them, but we can't because we don't have papers. Sometimes the bosses are really mean and they'll deport you. Sometimes, when someone does or says something, they point to the police and the police can do something to us. That's why people are in silence right now."

[Seth] "How much do you make each year?"

[Samuel] "One person makes $3,000 to $5,000 a year. We are not asking to be rich. We don't come here to be rich; we come here to be a little bit more stable than we are over there.

... Yes...it is very little. They say that the boss does not want us to earn money, and I ask myself why? People that can work, work because they are making the effort to earn, and they can earn each pound, like the poor.

...There are some supervisors that explain how we are going to pick or what we are supposed to do, but what happens is that there are other supervisors that are bad people or have bad tempers and don't explain well what we do or don't do or what we pick. They even scream at us, using words that you should not say. Because if you treat people bad you are not going to work calmly or happy, but they scream at people. ... And the boss doesn't know, and if we tell the boss, he might not believe us and they scream at us and call us 'dumb donkeys' or 'dogs.' It's very ugly how they treat us. ...and you cant do that; we are at work. They have to explain things well to the people and that is the first thing, and the second is that they scream and they don't say what the person has to do and then they scream really bad things and that is not right."



One of Marcelina's cousins, Joaquin, nicknamed "Gordo," has become a friend of mine over the two years of my fieldwork. He elaborated on the stresses and contradictions of picking,

"and the supervisors say they'll take away our I.D.s if we don't pick the minimum. They tell us we are dropping too many berries, we have to go slow so we don't drop so much—because—and when we go slowly, we don't reach [the minimum] and 'go faster!' They tell us, 'you don't know how to work,' 'Indian, you don't know!' We already know how to work and why the berries drop and because of

what they fall. If we go slowly, we can't make any money. If we hurry up, we drop berries and they come and castigate us. 'Dumb donkey!' 'Dog!' We are afraid."

The first day I picked, the only people who were as slow me were two Chicana girls from California and one Chicano man from Seattle who commuted up each day. After the first week, the two Chicana girls began picking into the same bucket in order to be able to keep one job and one paycheck. The second week, I did not see the man from Seattle anymore. I asked one of the supervisors where he had gone, assuming that he had decided the work was too difficult and given up. She corrected me by informing me that the farm had made a deal with him that if he could make it through a week picking berries, they would give him a salaried job packing the berries in the plant. He has apparently been "one of the hardest workers" in the plant since then. I then inquired as to why the Indigenous Mexicans could not get the packing jobs. The supervisor replied, "the people who live in the migrant camps cannot have those jobs, they can only pick berries." She considered it a farm policy and could not explain why.

Thus, marginalization begets marginalization. The indigenous Mexicans who are also the poorest people must live in the migrant camps because they don't have the resources to rent apartments in town. Because they live in the camps, they are given only the worst jobs on the farm. Official farm policies subtly reinforce labor and ethnic hierarchies. These profiles show that the position of the Triqui workers at the bottom of the hierarchy is multiply determined by poverty, education, language, citizenship, and ethnicity. In addition, these factors produce each other. For example, a family's poverty cuts short an individual's education, which limits one's ability to learn Spanish (much less English), which limits one's ability to leave the bottom rung of labor. Poverty, at the same time, is determined in part by the institutional racism at work against Triqui people in the first place. The segregation on

the farm is the result of a complex system of feedback and feedforward loops organized around these multiple factors.

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST

In many ways – ethnicity, education, citizenship, social class– I did not take the appropriate position in the labor hierarchy. For the purposes of my research, I placed myself in the housing and occupations of the Triqui undocumented immigrants. However, due to my social and cultural capital, the farm executives treated me as someone out of place, giving me special permission to keep my job and my shack even though I was never able to pick the minimum. At times, they even treated me as a superior, asking me for advice related to the future of labor relations and housing on the farm. Crop managers, field bosses and checkers treated me as some sort-of jester, as respected entertainment. They often joked with me, laughing and using rhetorical questions like, "are you still glad you chose to pick?" As they walked through the fields, they regularly stopped where I was and talked with me, picking into my buckets to help me keep up, something they did not do regularly for other pickers.

On the other hand, the other pickers interacted with me with a mixture of respect and suspicion. For example, after the Jet Li movie mentioned above, Samuel began to tell me about what other pickers thought of me. He said that in the beginning people gossiped that there was a bald, white guy in the camp and they did not know why he was here. Several people suggested that I was a spy for the police, the border patrol, or the U.S. government. Others though I might be a drug smuggler looking for a good cover. In fact, while I lived in the Triqui home town of the pickers in Oaxaca, several people, including town officials,

threatened to put me in jail or kidnap me because I must be a spy or a drug trafficker or simply because I did not belong.

Later, Samuel complained about the problems in his hometown due to lack of resources. He said that they need a strong mayor. I asked him if he would be mayor someday.

> [Samuel] "No. You need to have some education and some money and some ideas. You will be President of San Miguel, Set, and you can do a lot of good! We need a water pump and paved roads. You could set up a pharmacy and build a house and marry a Triqui woman [laughing]."

On our migration from Washington to California at the end of the season, one of Samuel's cousins, Juan, remembered a conversation in which a friend of his told other Triqui people that I picked berries. Another person said, "yes, but he picks really slowly, he always comes behind." A third person responded, "yes, but if I were a *gabacho*, I wouldn't even be in the field." Juan concluded, "They say that it's good. They say that you want to know for yourself the suffering of the poor."

Over my first few months living and working in positions usually reserved for Triqui people, I noticed that even the children in the camp acted within the farm segregation. Given that the adults in the camps were suspicious of me, I spent a fair amount of time playing with the children. After asking many sets of children where they were from and which languages they spoke, I realized that all of the children who came to play with me were Triqui and absolutely none of the Mixteco or mestizo children ever came to my shack. Apparently, the children recognized that I was positioned in a Triqui location in the farm hierarchy and responded to me accordingly.

Near the end of my research, Samuel told me, "it is good that you are experiencing for yourself how the poor suffer (*experimentas como sufren los pobres).*" He said, "right now we and you are the same; we are poor. But, later you will be rich and live in a luxury house (*casa de lujo*)." I explained that I do not want a luxury house, but rather a little, simple house. Samuel clarified, looking me in the eyes, "but you will have a bathroom on the inside, right?"

CALIFORNIA

The general features of the ethnic-labor hierarchy in California agriculture was the same as that in Washington, however the specifics changed. Whites still had the best jobs, followed by U.S. Latinos, then mestizo Mexicans, and finally indigenous Mexicans. At the end of the berry season in the Skagit Valley, I drove with several Triqui families to California. There, we lived in slum apartments and worked short stints pruning for grape vineyards. However, most California farms worked through contractors, without making each picker an employee of the farm. These farms pay their contractor a lump sum for getting a particular field pruned or picked. The contractor, then, pays each worker a certain amount per vine pruned. During the five months I lived and worked in the Central Valley of California, my companions and I were consistently paid less than minimum wage. On top of that, most contractors prohibited driving oneself or walking to the field. We had to get a ride from the "ride-giver (*raitero*)," almost always a relative of the contractor, for five to seven dollars a day. In the end, we were often paid close to ten dollars for a five-hour work day. In addition, the state of California does not provide childcare for farm workers like Washington does. Thus, either one parent gives up their paycheck to stay home with the children or the

parents pay ten dollars to an unofficial childcare program in a nearby slum apartment. The Triqui pickers also reported more explicit racism in California, specifically from U.S. Latino people there. Thus, though the general shape of the social hierarchy remains the same, the specifics of the everyday lives of the Triqui people in California are worse in several respects. In fact, most contractors in California would not even consider letting me work. I consider this partially due to their recognition that I did not fit in that position in the hierarchy and partially due to their fear that the poor working conditions they oversee might be exposed.

HIERARCHIES AT WORK

As the ethnographic data above has illustrated, responsibilities, stressors, and privileges differ from the top to the bottom of this labor hierarchy. The workers on every level of the ladder worry about factors over which they do not have control. As demonstrated above, control decreases and anxieties accumulate as one moves down the pecking order. Those at the top worry about market competition and the weather. The middle managers worry about these factors as well as about how they are treated by their bosses. The pickers also worry about picking enough to make the minimum weight so as to avoid losing their job and their housing. The higher one is positioned in the structure, the more control over time one has. The executives and managers can take breaks as they see fit. The administrative assistants and checkers can choose to take short breaks, given their supervisors consent or absence. The field workers can only take infrequent breaks if they are willing to sacrifice pay, and even then they may be reprimanded. The higher one is located in the hierarchy, the more one is paid. The executives and managers are financially secure

with comfortable homes. The administrative staff and checkers are paid minimum wage and live as members of the rural working class in less comfortable housing. The pickers are paid piecemeal and live in poor conditions in the labor camp shacks. They are always aware that they are at risk of losing even this poor housing. Among the pickers, those in strawberries and blueberries make less money and are more likely to miss the minimum and be fired than those in apples.

The ethnic-labor hierarchy seen here – White and Asian-American U.S. Citizen, Latino U.S. Citizen or Resident, undocumented mestizo Mexican, undocumented Indigenous Mexican – is common in much of North American farming. The relative status of Triqui people below Mixtecos can be understood via a pecking order of perceived indigeneity. Many farm workers and managers told me the Triqui are more purely indigenous than other groups; Triqui is still their primary language and, "they are more simple." In fact, it appears that, in this case, ethnicity is a camouflage for perceived indigeneity versus civilization. The Anglo- and Japanese-Americans inhabit the pole of civilization. The Triqui are positioned as indigenous peasants, savages, simple children. The more civilized one is perceived to be, the better one's job. This hierarchy of civilization also correlates roughly with citizenship from U.S. citizen to U.S. resident / Mexican citizen to undocumented immigrant / Mexican citizen (see the table at the end of this chapter for further correlations).

Laboring bodies are organized by ethnicity and citizenship into superimposed hierarchies of labor, respect, and suffering (see table below). The overdetermination of the adverse lot of the indigenous Mexican migrant berry picker fits well what Philippe Bourgois calls "conjugated oppression" (1988). In Bourgois' analysis of a Central American banana plantation, ethnicity and class work together to produce an oppression materially and

phenomenologically different than that produced by either alone. In my research, class, race, and citizenship conspire to deny Triqui workers of respect and deprive them of physical and mental health.

As expressed made clear in the ethnographic data above, this segregation is not conscious or willed on the part of the farm owners or managers. Much the opposite. Rather, these inequalities are driven by larger structural forces as well as the anxieties they produce. The farm can be seen as a sort of "gray zone," akin to that described by Primo Levi (1988) in the lagers of the Holocaust (see also Bourgois 2004). The gray zone described by Levi involved such severe conditions that any prisoner seeking her own survival was inherently complicit with a system of violence against others. While I do not mean to say that the system of U.S. agriculture is in any way as horrific as the Holocaust, Levi himself encourages us to use his analysis to understand everyday situations such as "a big industrial factory" (1988 40). In the multi-layered gray zone of contemporary U.S. agriculture, even ethical growers are forced in their fight for survival by an increasingly harsh market to participate in a system of labor that perpetuates suffering. This gray zone is also seen when workers seek to impress their superiors in order to move up the ranks, for example checkers cheating pickers out of pounds due to pressure from above.

Late in the summer of 2003, the majority of the berry pickers walked out of the field just after the pay per weight was lowered in a sneaky way. The pickers wrote a document listing over twenty grievances about the working conditions, from low pay to explicit racist statements from supervisors, from lack of lunch breaks to unfair promotions of mestizo and Latino workers over indigenous pickers. Over the next few days, several executives and a dozen pickers held meetings to discuss the grievances. The executives became visibly

surprised and upset at the descriptions of explicit racist treatment and differential promotions on the farm. They promptly instructed all the crop managers to pass along the message to treat all workers with respect. Lunch breaks and higher pay were instituted, though silently rescinded the following summer. The pickers demanded that the document they wrote become a contract for change with the farm signed by the farm executives. The farm president made it officially into a "memo." This situation demonstrates the complicated nature of labor on the farm. The executives demand that all workers are treated with respect at the same time that their anxieties over farm survival prohibit them from effectively addressing the primary, economic concerns of the pickers. The increasingly harsh market in which the farm operates coerces these growers to remain complicit with a system of labor segregation harmful to the pickers.

At the same time, there are hints of "bad faith" on the farm, more with certain supervisors than others. The phrase, "bad faith," comes from Jean Paul Sartre (1956) to describe the ways in which individuals knowingly deceive themselves in order not to acknowledge realities disturbing to them. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) builds on this concept to indicate ways in which communities collectively engage in self-deception in the face of poverty and suffering. This collective bad faith is evident in the Skagit Valley in, among other places, the segregation effected by farm policies like the one barring pickers from the English classes. It is further enabled by the layers of bureaucracy and linguistic barriers separating the growers from the more explicit mistreatment of the berry pickers.

During my first summer picking berries, as will be described in later chapters, I accompanied Abelino to a local clinic to see a doctor about his recent knee injury that occured picking strawberries. After the initial physical exam and brief history-taking, the

physician matter-of-factly suggested Marcelino get a lighter job on the farm, "something sitting down, maybe at a desk." Marcelino simply laughed.

LABOR-ETHNIC-SUFFERING-RESPECT HIERARCHY TABLE

Respect; Health; Financial Security; Control over time and others' labor	Indoor Work Sitting Work	U.S. Citizen	English Language	Anglo- and Japanese-American
				U.S. Latino
	Standing Work	U.S. Resident	Spanish Language	
				Mestizo Mexican
				Mixteco Mexican
Lack of respect, health, and control.	Outdoor Work Kneeling Work	Undocumented	Indigenous Language	Triqui Mexican

CHAPTER TWO

"HOW THE POOR SUFFER"
SUFFERING THE HIERARCHY / THE HIERARCHY OF SUFFERING

EXPLAINING AND BEING EXPLAINED

Like most researchers, I have struggled with explaining my research questions and dissertation project to different audiences. With other anthropologists and sociologists, I have become accustomed to using social theory jargon like "Bourdieuian" and "Foucaultian," "governmentality" and "biopower," receiving knowing looks in response, some sympathetic and others critical. However, anthropology at times seems especially difficult to explain to those outside the field. We do not use methods commonly understood to be research proper, like pipetting into test tubes or handing out surveys, leading focus groups or conducting semi-structured interviews in a closed room. Instead, we perform participant-observation over a longer time period, gaining field data from conversations, observations of everyday life and embodied participation in related activities. However, for much of the world, this appears to be primarily "hanging out," asking naïve questions, and occasionally using a tape-recorder or writing in a notebook. For many anthropologists, demonstrating who they are through their questions and determination to observe and learn is more effective than their best efforts at explanation. This was certainly my experience during my dissertation fieldwork.

As a student in joint anthropology and medicine training, my explanation was more complicated. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I found that most people did not know the word, "anthropologist," or assumed it meant someone who studies bones and ruins somewhere like Egypt. So, I tried explaining that I was a medical *and* anthropology student

wanting to learn about health, labor and ethnic relations throughout a year of migration. This seemed to make more sense to people and slow down the barrage of questions as to why I, a white American, was living in a labor camp. However, it also led to a few pickers coming to my shack to ask for medicines for backaches and toothaches as well as to me being introduced by the labor camp foreman as "Doctor Seth." After explaining to several people that I had no medicines and was in the camp primarily to learn, I began to assume that pickers put up with me in the camp as an incompetent, useless, yet interested doctor.

As touched on in the last chapter, I was out of place in the farm hierarchy in many ways – social class, ethnicity, citizenship, etc. – and this led variously to respect, laughter, and suspicion from people in different social locations on the farm. Of course, the confusion existed outside the farm as well. While spending the winter in California, Francisco and I went to a laundromat to wash my and his family's clothes. One of the other Latino patrons asked Francisco in Spanish why he was doing laundry with his "*jefe,*" his boss. Francisco answered that I was not his boss, but rather a friend. The other man was not easily convinced, "No really, why are you here with your boss?" he said in Spanish. Francisco explained that I was a student who lived in the camp and picked strawberries on a farm with them and that I was learning his indigenous language. Francisco summarized, "he is experiencing for himself how the poor suffer" (*experimentar como sufren los pobres*). Although I had never spoken of my work in this way, this particular phrase was employed by my Triqui companions more often than any other to explain to others why I was with them and what I was doing.

In many ways, this is a perfect, brief description of the embodied anthropology of migrant labor I am attempting to perform. This explanation also succeeded in satisfying the

curiosity and suspicion of the Triqui, Mixteco and mestizo Mexican listeners to whom it was directed. My confusing presence in the lives of Triqui migrant laborers was considered legitimate, even sensible, once it was understood to be in order to "experience how the poor suffer." As can be seen in this phrase, my Triqui companions consider themselves to be defined as, above all, "the poor" (*los pobres*). Interestingly, the category of social class seems to be prioritized above ethnicity (Triqui), nationality (Mexican), citizenship status (undocumented), and many other potential identities. As seen in the last chapter, these categories are inextricably linked in the farm labor hierarchy. Though these other identifiers were used regularly, the primary category remained "the poor." In addition, they and the other Mexican people with whom they spoke considered the primary metaphor of their lives, work, and migration to be "suffering" (*sufrimiento*). Poverty and suffering are central experiences of my migrant Triqui companions' lives and are closely interlinked.

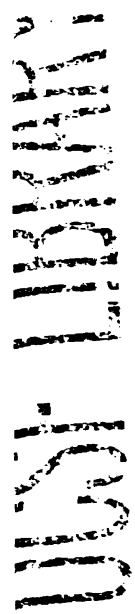
This chapter will go on to discuss briefly the controversy between writing of a hierarchy of suffering on the farm and an extreme version of philosophical relativism. Next, I will consider the factors in the ethnicity-citizenship-labor hierarchy that lead to correlated suffering disparities. This will be put in perspective utilizing nationwide health statistics for migrant farm laborers. The remainder of the paper will consider the suffering of the Triqui strawberry pickers through their everyday lives picking in the U.S., migrating within the U.S., leaving their homes in Oaxaca, and crossing the border. I will close by sketching an understanding of suffering as an embodiment of the violence continuum.

A NOTE ON SUFFERING AND ACTION

Some anthropological readers may find the phrase "hierarchy of suffering" in the title of this chapter is troublesome. There appear to be two understandings of this phrase that cause anthropologists discomfort. The first is seeing "hierarchy" as giving the suffering of some people moral, even ontological, priority over that of others. The second is seeing this hierarchization as an empiricist venture that gathers "facts" without awareness of the ever-present interpretation and bias involved in the production and ordering of such data. Both of these understandings belie the uncomfortable tension between the self-reflexive turn in cultural anthropology that criticizes ethnographic authority and the urgency of witnessing to extreme suffering that is engineered by an unequal social dis-order.

The discomfort can be seen as related to cultural relativism, a classic and central analytic approach in sociocultural anthropology many would attribute first to Franz Boaz. This stance works against the seemingly automatic cross-cultural judgment based on ethnocentric assumptions of superiority of one's own culture. These assumptions are especially destructive when informing Western agencies in international development that blame the "culture" of other nations for their lack of economic development or health care as well as federal, state and local governments that regard the "culture" of the ghetto to be blameworthy for its interpersonal violence and poverty. Anthropologists and other social scientists need this approach in order to argue against recent totalizing and acontextually encapsulations of the "culture of poverty," etc (Sakala 1987). This approach reminds us to take a humble, listening posture in order to understand the logics behind and functions of various practices and meanings in other cultures. Thus, we are made aware that all humans – including anthropologists – act within webs of significance and social forces that structure and inform their perspectives and actions.

The analytically and politically useful method of cultural relativism seems to have the potential to find its extreme corollary in a depoliticizing relativism of suffering. Such an extreme relativism might assert that counting forms of suffering is a form of old-school positivism on the one hand or that prioritizing certain forms of suffering is impossible and moralizing. Many anthropologists (e.g. Das 1987) argue persuasively that pain and suffering cannot be fully communicated nor shared between people. Others (e.g. Csordas 1994) point out that there is some degree of interpersonality in the experience of embodiment. If taken to its extreme, a relativist logic might hold that, because no one can truly know the experience of suffering of another human, suffering cannot be compared nor contrasted. Thus, the existential suffering and repetitive stress injury of the academic anthropologist behind her computer in her private office is placed on the same plane as the acute poverty, racist insult, and physical deterioration of the indigenous migrant peasant leaving her family behind and trekking through the hot desert sun in order to survive. Neither is given moral or political priority over the other. While cultural relativism's warning to avoid positivistic and moralizing analyses is necessary and helpful, a corollary relativism of suffering can depoliticize structural violence and its devastating effects on people, bodies, and minds.



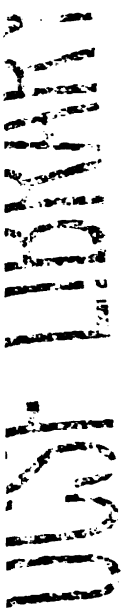
There are good reasons to hierarchize suffering on empirical ethnographic, strategic political, and phenomenological grounds. Many prominent medical anthropologists write about "social suffering," which could roughly be defined as the study of the relationship among sickness, social asymmetry, and cultural meanings. Arthur Kleinman has provided thick descriptions of the meanings and determinants of suffering within particular social and cultural contexts (e.g. 1988, 1995, 1997). Paul Farmer (e.g. 1992, 1999), Merrel Singer (e.g. 1998), Soheir Morsy (e.g. 1996) and others have exposed that sicknesses are meted out

unequally along the fault lines of race, gender and class. Philippe Bourgois calls this "socially structured suffering" in a recent article where he shows even the self-destructive behaviors of homeless heroin addicts to be rooted in social and political marginalization (*In preparation*). These ethnographers provide empirical evidence that suffering is inversely correlated with political, economic and social standing. Furthermore, the experience of suffering is not ambiguous. My bodily participation in the different rungs of the farm labor hierarchy entailed clearly distinct experiences of suffering. In fact, it seemed that there was a common understanding among workers in all positions on the farm that the strawberry pickers had the hardest, most painful job. The specifics of suffering on the farm will be covered below.

There are high human and political stakes involved in the relativism of suffering. In the end, this extreme brand of relativism functions to justify the inaction of those with power and the reproduction of assymetrical social structures. Emmanuel Levinas, the French phenomenological philosopher, writes specifically of suffering and its justification in "entre nous" (1998). He argues that our human responsibility is to understand the suffering of others as "useless" and "senseless" and to, therefore, work toward its amelioration. He calls for "the end of theodicy," because placing a meaning or justification on suffering ultimately justifies the social structures producing that very suffering. Veena Das utilizes ethnographic data from the Bhopal disaster and a massacre in India to make a similar analytic move (1994). She shows that attempts to make meaning from suffering function to validate the patriarchal, unequal social structures while silencing the sufferer. Instead, she argues that suffering must be understood as illegitimate and chaotic in order to allow the continued existence of those suffering. According to these social philosophers suffering must not be

justified in order that action be taken to comfort sufferers and prevent further suffering. On the issue of ethnographic authority, Nancy Scheper-Hughes advocates a "good-enough ethnography" (1992) that is self-reflexive at the same time that it is empirical and willing to take a passionate, yet open, stance.

Given that suffering empirically falls unequally on the side of the poor and powerless, an equivalently unequal amount of action is needed to counteract the forces producing this suffering. James Quesada (1999) shows the erasure of the reality of a suffering hierarchy via a focus on the suffering of the elite. He indicates that language in the "Save Our State" initiative in California utilized a "contest of suffering" to validate the suffering of white Californians while erasing that of Mexican migrant laborers. This language, then, played a part in the politico-legal denial of social services to some of the most exploited laborers in the state. Such a focus on elite suffering serves to foster the reproduction of exploitative social conditions. Thus, writing of a hierarchy of suffering on the farm not only reflects the empirical reality of unequal suffering, but also serves as a call for necessary strategic political action, what Paul Farmer calls "pragmatic solidarity" (1998), to be dealt with further in the Conclusion.

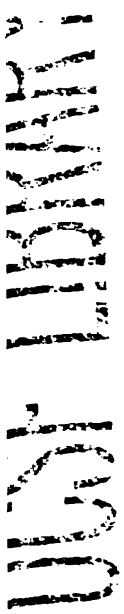


CONJUGATED OPPRESSION AND THE BODY ON THE FARM

As described in the previous chapter, the hierarchies of perceived ethnicity and citizenship correlate closely with the labor and housing pecking order on the farm. As already enumerated, the multiply determined "abject/ivity" (Willens 2005) of the Triqui migrant berry pickers fits what Philippe Bourgois calls "conjugated oppression" (1988). With further inspection, it becomes clear that this whole complex maps onto a hierarchy of

suffering. Here, the addition of the lens of the body to the analytic of conjugated oppression leads to further understanding of the synergism among class, ethnicity, citizenship and health. In the case of the berry farm in the Skagit Valley, we see the somatization of power differentials and prejudice. The working and living conditions, degree of respect received, and access to political power of each of the groups along the labor hierarchy lead to different and cumulative suffering from top to bottom. This focus on the embodiment of conjugated oppression lends clarity to the reciprocal importance of social forces to bodily suffering.

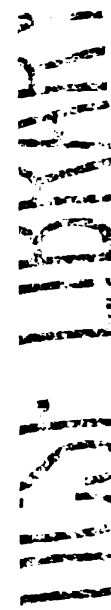
As seen in the last chapter, the darker one's skin, the more "indigenous" one is perceived to be, the more psychologically stressful, physically strenuous, and dangerous one's job. Thus, where a migrant body falls on the dual ethnic-labor hierarchy shapes how much and what kind of suffering must be endured. The further down the ladder from Anglo-American U.S. citizen to undocumented indigenous Mexican one is positioned, the more degrading the treatment by supervisors, the more physically taxing the work, the more exposure to weather and pesticides, the more fear of the government, the less comfortable one's housing, and the less control over one's own time.



Of course, the people on every level of the hierarchy suffer. Yet, suffering is also roughly cumulative from top to bottom. Some of the social and mental forms of suffering were listed in the prior chapter as anxieties – over profitability and increasing competition for the farm executives, over farm profitability and disrespect from supervisors for the administrative assistants, as well as over racist insult from supervisors and familial economic survival for the berry pickers. On the more strictly physical level of suffering, this rough accumulation continues to hold. For example, the farm executives worry most about the rare diseases of the relatively wealthy, like heart disease and breast cancer. The administrative

assistants worry about these sicknesses as well as about repetitive stress injury like carpel tunnel syndrome. The strawberry pickers have even greater chances of being afflicted with heart disease and most cancers as well as greater likelihood of musculoskeletal injury and pain.

The Triqui people inhabit the bottom rung of the pecking order in the Skagit. They live in the coldest and wettest shacks in the most hidden labor camp with no insulation, no heat, and no wooden ceiling under the tin roof and hold the most stressful, humiliating, and physically strenuous jobs seven days a week without breaks while exposed to pesticides and the weather. Accordingly, the Triqui pickers bear an unequal share of sickness and pain.

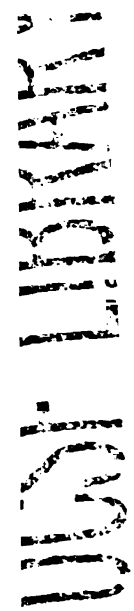


MIGRANT FARM WORK AND HEALTH IN NATIONAL CONTEXT

Nationwide, migrant farm workers have worse health statistics than other groups. Consistent with the concept of conjugated oppression, these health disparities fall along citizenship, ethnicity, and class lines. The National Agricultural Worker Survey indicates that 81% of farm workers are immigrants, 95% of whom were born in Mexico (Kandula 2004), and 52% of whom are undocumented (Villarejo 2004). It is estimated that there are one million indigenous Oaxacans in the U.S., mostly Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui people (McGuire 2003). The average age of agricultural workers is 29yo with very few over 60 (Frank 2004; Slesinger 1992). We must keep in mind that health statistics for migrant farm workers are shaky due to the fact that there is an unclear denominator. Estimates of the migrant farm laborer population in the U.S. range from 750,000 to 12 million (Slesinger 1992). In addition, most morbidity and mortality data are skewed lower due to undocumented workers' fear of reporting health problems, poor enforcement of labor and

health policies in agriculture, as well as the fact that the vast majority Latin American migrant laborers return to their home countries as they age or become disabled which leads to a "healthy worker bias" (Villarejo 2003).

Triqui Mexican migrant farm workers have worse health outcomes in part related to their belonging to an economically, politically and socially marginalized meta-ethnic group, Latinos. Though Triqui people would not consider themselves part of this group, most public health and census data would include all people, indigenous or not, with Latin American heritage in this category. Latino people, regardless of immigrant status, have lower health status according to many indicators than other ethnic groups in the U.S. An Institute of Medicine report indicates that all ethnic minorities receive definitively lower quality health care (Kauffold 2004). In addition, according to recent research, Latino children have twice the death and hospitalization rates from pedestrian injury than do white children in the U.S. and Latino adults have lower rates of screening for cancers (Kandula 2004). Though there has been little related research, it is likely that indigenous Oaxacans in the U.S. have worse health than other Latinos due to their relative paucity of linguistic, educational, and occupational resources.



In addition, Triqui strawberry pickers belong to the disadvanted group in terms of health statistics, that of immigrants in the U.S. Several studies show that the health status of immigrants declines with increasing time in the U.S. Such health markers as obesity, serum cholesterol, tobacco smoking, alcohol use, illicit drug use, mental illness, suicide, and death by homicide increase between first and second-generation Mexican immigrants in the U.S. (ibid; Villarejo 2003). Nutritional value of the diet of immigrants also decreases significantly during the first year in the U.S. (Villarejo 2003). Those immigrants from Latin America who

are undocumented have the additional negative health determinant of having to cross the "most violent border in the world between 2 countries not at war with one another" (McGuire 2003). Undocumented status further increases allostatic load, the accumulation of biological risk associated with chronic stress (McGuire 2003), due to fear of immigration and other authorities.

Beyond the decreased health status associated with Latin ethnicity in the U.S., immigrant status, and undocumented status, Mexican migrant farm workers suffer poor health due to their class position. Agricultural work has an extremely high fatality rate with 21.3 deaths per 100,000 workers per year compared to the overall worker rate of 3.9 (Frank 2004). In addition, agricultural workers have increased rates of nonfatal injuries, heart disease, and many cancers (Frank 2004). Despite some controversy, there is strong data indicating that there are greater relative risks among agriculture workers of cancers of the nervous system, lymphatic and hematopoetic systems, lip, prostate, as well as melanoma, soft-tissue sarcoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and multiple myeloma (Frank 2004). There is also an increased risk of stillbirth and of congenital birth defects in children born near farms (Frank 2004; Mobed 1992). As might be expected, many (43%) agricultural workers in a recent study indicated that they have back pain (Frank 2004). In addition, research indicates anywhere form 29% to 44% of agricultural workers reporting chronic symptoms associated with pesticide exposure such as headache, skin and eye irritation, and a flu-like syndrome (Frank 2004).

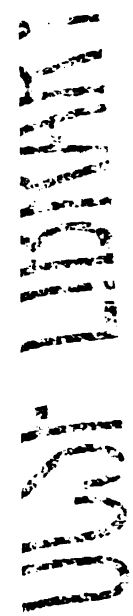
To further specify class position, migrant and seasonal farm workers are the most vulnerable and suffer the poorest health status within the agriculture industry. HIV infection is three times more common among migrant and seasonal farm workers than in the general

U.S. and Mexican populations (Rural Migration News 2005). The vast majority of these individuals and families live below the poverty line (Rust 1990; Slesinger 1992; Villarejo 2004). Migrant and seasonal workers have increased rates of many chronic conditions, such as malnutrition, anemia, hypertension, diabetes, chronic dermatitis, fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, anxiety, memory problems, sterility, blood disorders, dental problems, and abnormalities in liver and kidney function (Slesinger 1992; Mobed 1992). Such workers have increased pulmonary problems to such a degree that farm work has a comparable effect to smoking on lung health (Mobed 1992). They have increased incidence of acute sicknesses such as urinary tract and kidney infections, heat stroke, anthrax, ascariasis, encephalitis, leptospirosis, rabies, slmonellosis, tetanus, coccidioidomycosis, most of which are believed to be related in large part to poor living and working quarters and lack of sanitary bathrooms (Mobed 1992; Sakala 1987). Tuberculosis prevalence, also related to poor living conditions, is six times more common in this population than in the general U.S. population (Villarejo 2004). Finally, children of migrant farm workers show high rates of malnutrition, vision problems, dental problems, anemia and excess blood lead levels (Mobed 1992).

Despite worse health status and a correlated need for more health and social services, migrant farm workers have many obstacles to access such services. Farm workers are entirely or partially excluded from worker's compensation benefits in all but fifteen states (Sakala 1987). The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 guaranteed minimum wage, time and a half wage for overtime and restricted child labor, but did not apply to farm workers. Amendments in 1966 ostensibly extended eligibility to farm workers, but disqualified the majority by excluding those on small farms, those paid piece wages, etc. These amendments increased eligibility of children working on farm, but less than other child workers. For

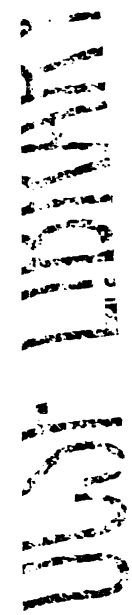
example, any age child in agriculture could work at non-hazardous jobs and 16 year olds could work at hazardous jobs. The 1974 amendments retained the previous exclusions. The majority of farm workers is also excluded by the Social Security Act and its later amendments from benefits related to unemployment. In addition, even though migrant housing conditions are addressed in Housing Act of 1949 and Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, living conditions in labor camps continue to be appalling. Finally, farm workers were denied the right to collective bargaining under Wagner Act of 1935. They have gained the right to bargain only in the state of California under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. While this led to labor improvements, the agriculture system in California remains extremely exploitative. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that even existing provisions for farm workers are regularly violated.

Only 5% of migrant farm workers have health insurance, contrasted with 84% of U.S. residents overall (Villarejo 2004; Migration News 2004). Migrant laborers are less likely than other groups to obtain preventive care, with 27% never receiving a routine physical exam, 25% never having a dental check-up, and 43% never receiving an eye exam (Slesinger 1992). Although there is a federal Migrant Health Program funding migrant clinics, it is estimated that this program serves only 13% of the intended population (Slesinger 1992). Finally, undocumented status and the inter-state migratory nature of their lives means that less than one third of migrant women qualify for Medicaid despite living well below the poverty line (Kauffold 2004). In fact, many migrant workers in the U.S. go through many hardships to return to Mexico for health care (Kauffold 2004) and cite economic, cultural, and linguistic reasons for this choice.



TRIQUI SUFFERING AND THE VIOLENCE CONTINUUM

The rest of this chapter will be devoted to an ethnography of "how the poor suffer," in this case focused on the poorest of the poor on the farm, the Triqui strawberry pickers. As we will see, the suffering of the Triqui migrant laborers is a direct embodiment of the violence continuum (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). The labor camps and shacks in which the Triqui pickers live (that a visiting friend of mine called "one inch above squalor") were described in the last chapter. The grueling working conditions in which they pick on the farm in Washington State as well as the ways in which they are mistreated were touched on in the last chapter. Marcelina highlighted for us the suffering brought by having to leave one's family in Oaxaca in order to help them survive. In this section, I will highlight the suffering of three Triqui migrant workers in particular. These vignettes bring up the suffering involved with the context of migration and the crucial moment of crossing the border. In addition, while the suffering of all Triqui berry pickers is undoubtedly determined and potentiated by their position at the bottom of various hierarchies, each of the three cases serves to underscore a different aspect of the embodiment of the violence continuum. Abelino's knee pain highlights the physical and mental suffering caused by the structural violence of segregated labor. Crescencio's headache brings to light the embodied effects of the verbal and symbolic violence of racist insult. Finally, Bernardo's stomach pains underline the health effects of the direct political violence of police repression.



ABELINO AND THE PAIN OF PICKING

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I picked once or twice a week on the farm in Washington State and experienced many forms of pain for days afterward. I often felt sick to

my stomach the night before picking, due to stress about picking the minimum weight. As I picked, my knees continually hurt as I tried different positions from which to pick, sometimes squatting, sometimes kneeling, sometimes on just one knee. Each time I stood up to take my berries to be weighed, it felt as if a warm liquid like my own blood was running down my pants and into my shoes. All day, I leaned forward to see the berries below the strawberry leaves and my neck and back began to hurt by the late morning. For the next two or three days picking, I took ibuprofen and sometimes used the hot tub in a local private gym to ease the aches despite my discomfort with my awareness of the clear inequalities inherent in my access to such amenities.

After the first week of picking on the farm, I asked two young female pickers about their knees and backs. One said that she could no longer feel anything ("*Mi cuerpo ya no puede sentir nada*"), though her knees still hurt sometimes. The other said that her knees, back and hips are always (*siempre*) hurting. Later that same afternoon, one of the young men I saw playing basketball every day the week before the harvest told me that he and his friend could no longer run since their bodies hurt so much ("*Ya no corremos; no aguantamos*"). In fact, even the vistas that were so sublime and beautiful to me had come to mean ugliness, pain, and work to the pickers. On multiple occasions, my Triqui companions responded with confusion to my exclamations about the area's beauty and explained that the fields were pure work (*puro trabajo*).

During my fieldwork, many Triqui people experienced notable health problems related to picking. The first Triqui picker whom I met was Abelino, a thirty five year-old father of four. He, his wife Abelina, and their children lived together in a small shack near me in the furthest labor camp from the main road. During one conversation over home-made

tacos in his shack, Abelino began to describe why Triqui people have to leave their home towns in Oaxaca, Mexico.

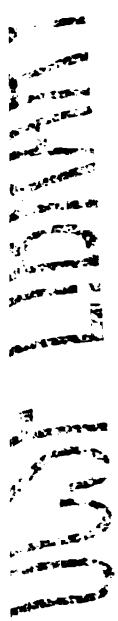
> "In Oaxaca, there's no work for us. There's no work. There's nothing. When there is no money, you don't know what to do. And shoes; you can't get any. A shoe like this [pointing to his tennis shoes] cost about 300 Mexican pesos. Per day, they're paying 30 or 40 pesos. You have to work two weeks to buy a pair of shoes. A pair of pants costs 300. And here, no. You earn 50 dollars a day and pants cost 15 or 20 dollars. And shoes cost 12 or 15 dollars. It is a little difficult. And we come here and it is a little better but you still suffer in the work. Moving to another place is also difficult. You suffer a lot with your family. ... Coming here with the family and moving around to different places, we suffer. And the children miss their classes. They miss their classes and don't learn well. Because of this, we want to stay here only for a season with permission [legal documents] and let the children study in Mexico."
>
> He concludes, "Do we have to migrate to survive? Yes we do."

As made clear in Abelino's statements as well as in my field notes in the journal section on Oaxaca, the economic situation for the Triqui people in their hometowns is very depressed and depressing. In order to keep their homes and support their families in Oaxaca, they must leave in order to work. As discussed briefly in the journal section, the economic depression of Oaxaca is linked to discriminatory international policies originating in the United States as well as to unequal economic practices in Mexico. As seen in Abelino's words and in the journal section on migrating to California, the transitory nature of the lives of migrant laborers leads to suffering on many levels. Migrating from place to place allows for the most earnings to be saved toward whatever particular goal each worker has as well as to be sent back to family members in Oaxaca. At the same time, this ongoing movement leads to periods of homelessness, increased fear of being apprehended by law enforcement

and deported, uprooting of connections and relationships outside of the migration circuit, and loss of productive studies and continuity for children. Moving from state to state also functionally disqualifies workers, including pregnant women and recent mothers, from social and health services to which they would otherwise be eligible.

Later that same night, Abelino explained the difficulty of entering the United States without official documents.

> "We have to migrate to survive. And we have to cross the border, suffering and—and—and walk two days and two nights, sometimes five days to get here and work and support the American people. Because they don't work like we do. They just get rich working a job—a light job—like the shops, the offices, but they don't work in the field. But we Mexicans from many Mexican states come here to maintain our families. We want to get permission to enter just for a harvest season and then return to our country."



Crossing the border from Mexico to the United States is a time of incredible suffering for Triqui migrants. As seen in my field notes along with the quotes in the journal section on the border, crossing the border involves financial, physical, and emotional hardship. Each migrant pays approximately $1,000 to $2,000 to various people along the way for rides and guidance. They walk hurriedly in physically impossible conditions getting stuck by cactus spines, attempting to avoid poisonous rattle snakes, climbing and jumping over numerous barbed-wire fences all the while using no flashlights in order to avoid being seen by the border patrol. Though I am a volunteer backpacking guide in my summers during graduate school, I have never hiked as fast or consistently without breaks as I did while crossing the border with my Triqui companions. As a rule, they do not bring enough food or water since these weigh enough to slow down one's hike significantly. Every step of the way carries a fearful awareness that at any moment one might be apprehended and deported by the border

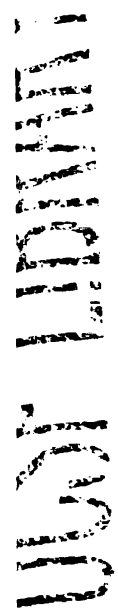
patrol, which would entail beginning the nightmarish trek all over again after having to find a way to scrape together enough money for another attempt.

The suffering Abelino talked about most, however, was related to picking on the farm. Early in my time on the farm, Abelino explained to me what picking is like, "...you pick with your hand, bent over, kneeling like this [demonstrating with both knees fully bent and his head bowed forward]. Your back hurts; you get knee pains and pain here [touching his hip]. Well, when it rains, you get pretty mad and—and—you have to keep picking. They don't give lunch breaks. You have to work every day like that to make anything. You suffer a lot in work." He explains that although picking blueberries is not as physically hard as harvesting strawberries, one makes a lot less money.

One Wednesday in the middle of my first summer on the farm, like the other mornings I picked, I followed Abelino, his wife and their oldest daughter as they led the way to the field we were to pick that morning. It was pitch black before the sun rose and we wore warm, heavy clothes in layers to take off as the sun came up. We walked through a line and our picking cards for the day were marked with out beginning time, though, like usual, the cards were marked as though we had arrived thirty minutes later. We were assigned rows next to each other and began picking into our individual buckets without saying a word. As usual, I was quickly left behind in the row though I had learned to pick relatively quickly with both hands at once. We picked as fast as we could while squatting, alternating back and forth from right to left to pick both rows of berries next to us.

In the middle of one of the rows while picking, Abelino felt acute, intense pain in his right knee one of the countless times he pivoted from the right to the left. He stated that it felt like his foot would not move like it usually did and then the pain began. The pain was

most intense on the inside of the knee just behind the knee-cap. He also felt like there was something loose moving around within his knee. He attempted to keep working for the rest of the day in vain hopes that the pain would go away. He tried picking with his knees straightened while he bent at the hips, but this hurt almost as intensely and slowed him down significantly and he almost missed the minimum weight. At the end of the day, on our drive back to the camp, Abelino told our field supervisor about the incident. The supervisor said simply "OK" and quickly drove away in his white farm pick-up without any follow-up. Unsure of what to do, Abelino tried to pick again the next day in great pain and once again barely picked the minimum. Abelino ended up seeing four doctors, a physical therapist, and a Triqui healer as well as attempting to go through the bureaucracy of worker's compensation. In the end, his pain was diagnosed by a physiatrist as patellar tendonitis or inflammation of the tendons behind the kneecap. Even with the many problems inherent in the interactions with health care that will be detailed in the next chapter, some of the health care professionals acknowledged that this problem was caused by his working conditions.



The social and political genesis of Abelino's knee pain could not be more clear. His pain is caused unequivocally by the fact that he, as an undocumented Triqui man, had been excluded by both international market inequalities and local discriminatory practices from all but one narrow and particularly traumatic labor position. This occupation requires him to bend over seven days a week, turning back and forth, in all kinds of weather and temperatures picking strawberries as fast as he possibly can. Tendonitis is understood biomedically to be caused by repetitive strain and stress on a particular tendon. The pain can be brought on over years of over work as well as made worse by individual straining events. Abelino's position at the bottom of the farm's ethnicity-citizenship-labor hierarchy means

that he, like hundreds of other Triqui pickers with knee, back, and hip pain, was forced into the exact conditions ripe for the harvesting of chronic tendon inflammation and deterioration. Furthermore, his suffering has been compounded by the fact that he, like other Triqui people from Oaxaca, are driven by the results of international economic policies and the growth of multi-national corporations to cross a mortally dangerous border and then to live in fear and remain transient wherever they work, despondently reproducing the same situation for their children who cannot stay in school to seek a better future.

Two years later, Abelino still tells me of his knee pain. Nonetheless, to improve the likelihood of survival of his family and to continue working toward the goal of putting a roof on his house in Oaxaca, he keeps picking.

CRESCENCIO AND THE ANGUISH OF INSULT

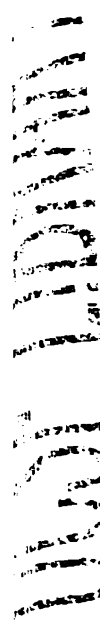
After a full day of picking strawberries near the end of my first summer of field work, the local migrant clinic held a small health fair in the migrant camp where I lived. The health fair involved a retired evangelical Christian missionary to South America bringing in a large R.V. that had been converted into a mobile dental clinic, as well as a dentist, a few nurses, a few health educators, and several medical students coming in their private cars. As the pickers were showering, changing out of their berry-stained clothing, and doing laundry, the nurses and health educators went around the camp letting people know about the fair they were going to hold on the basketball court. The fair began with the nurses and health educators rounding up the children and demonstrating how to brush and floss their teeth. After handing out toothbrushes and tooth paste to the children present, they brought out a large rectangular cake with brightly-colored frosting, cut it into many small pieces, and

handed it out to the long line of children. Next, they showed a video in which a single, subsistence farming mother contracted HIV from her boyfriend after her husband had died. The nurse who led the question and answer session afterwards made the point several times that "it is not just faggots (*jotos*) who get HIV, it is also women subsistence farmers (*campesinas)*, mothers, and girlfriends." The young men with whom I was standing snickered every time she said "*joto*." The medical students, all but two of whom spoke no Spanish whatsoever, came from a nearby medical school and spent the few hours of the health fair alternately watching, gossiping, and throwing used clothing out into a bustling crowd of Triqui and Mixteco migrant workers.

As the health fair was winding down and the staff from the local migrant clinic packed up, a Triqui man approached me with a question. Crescencio lives with his wife, two daughters aged 5 and 8 and a son aged 12 in a shack near mine on the farm. First, he asked if I had any medicine for headaches. When I asked for more information, he explained that he has had a debilitating headache for almost eight years, approximately the same length of time he has been migrating for work. He describes the headache as located on top of his head near the center, sometimes behind one or the other eye. The pain is so excruciating that he can no longer focus on anything until it is gone. Like any good medical student, I asked way too many questions. I found out that the headache is not made better or worse by eating, resting, sitting, standing, or almost anything else. Crescencio patiently explained to me that every time a farm supervisor calls him names on the job, makes fun of him, or reprimands him unfairly, he gets one of his excruciating headaches. The most common triggers include being called "stupid Oaxacan (*Oaxaco estúpido*)" or being told in a mean tone of voice to "hurry up" when he was already going as fast as possible. He is concerned because when he has the

headaches, any unpleasant noise or annoyance can make him angry and he is, thus, more prone to anger with his wife and children. His primary reason for seeking help with the headache is so that he will not get angry with his family.

After the first few seasons of migration to other states within Mexico, Crescencio went to see doctors at the government clinic in his hometown and they tried different pills and injections. Some of the medicines produced short-term relief, but the headaches continued coming back. After a few years of migrating within Mexico, Crescencio began migrating to the Sakuma farm in Washington State and the headaches continued. In the labor camp as well as back in Oaxaca when he returned in the winters, he met with a Triqui healer who performed the traditional reading of his future as well as the cleansing meant to draw bad spirits away from him. These interventions lessened the headaches for a time. In the end, though, the headaches returned.



The only thing Crescencio has found that makes his headache go away is drinking twenty to twenty-four beers. He tells me matter-of-factly that when he drinks these beers, the he can relax and the pain is gone the next morning when he wakes up. He has to use this remedy a few times in an average week. Not knowing what else to do, I suggested Crescencio go into the local migrant clinic to see if they could try something new for his problem. A week later, he told me that he had seen one of the doctors in the clinic, but that she didn't give him anything. These clinic interactions will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Crescencio's headaches present a complicated cycle of interlinkages between suffering and the social and symbolic forces structuring his life. To start the series off, like Abelino and all other Triqui migrants, Crescencio is victim to the social forces obliging him

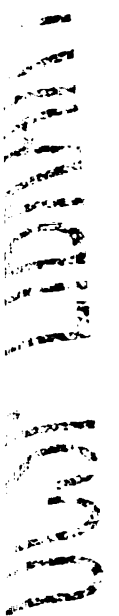
to live and work in damaging conditions at the bottom of a labor hierarchy. Next, those positioned above him in the hierarchy by the same social forces insult him with racist slurs and disrespectful, unrealistic demands. In turn, the contempt with which Crescencio is treated leads to his excruciating headaches. These socially-structured headaches lead him to get angry with his family and to get drunk, thus perfectly embodying the stereotype of Mexican migrants as wife-beaters and alcoholics. This stereotype, then, synergizes with the other more proximal social structures mentioned above to reproduce the disrespect with which he and other Mexican migrant workers are treated. In addition, this disrespect is added into the forces positioning Crescencio and other migrant berry pickers at the bottom of the farm hierarchy. As we will explore further in the next section, Crescencio's suffering is exacerbated even when he seeks relief from health care professionals in the migrant clinic. Specifically, his suffering is disregarded, he is blamed for his situation, and he is refused appropriate help.

BERNARDO AND THE DAMAGE OF TORTURE

During my time on the farm in Washington State, I met one Triqui family who lived outside the labor camp in an apartment in town. The twenty-seven year old father in this family, Martin, had been able to gain U.S. residency documents through his father, Bernardo, had become a U.S. resident in the 1986 amnesty for farm workers. Martin no longer works on the Sakuma Farm, instead he is now employed at a chicken packing plant along with his wife. Bernardo stopped working on the farm and moved back to Oaxaca when he became a U.S. resident. He has spent 5 months each summer since then working in a fish processing plant in Alaska in order to support himself, his wife, and sister. This family is from Santa

Ana, a different hometown in the mountains of Oaxaca near San Miguel, the hometown of the rest of the Triqui people in Washington State. While the whole Triqui Zone in Oaxaca, as seen in the journal section on Oaxaca, is reputed to be violent, Santa Ana is most notorious for its violence. It is also the home to the Unified Movement for Triqui Liberation (MULT), which, at the time of my research, was in the process of transforming from a rebel movement to an official political party.

Late in December, Martin called me and invited me to go with him on a road trip to Oaxaca. We left two days later and drove straight to Oaxaca without stopping to sleep. There were five people in my Honda Civic hatchback for the approximately 3,000 mile trip in each direction: myself, Martin, his daughter age 4, and his two sons age 6 and 7. The only stops we made were for two oil changes on the way down and the way back up, both in Arizona as well as to each quickly once or twice daily, and to fix a flat tire in Oaxaca. Otherwise, Martin and I took turns driving, napping, entertaining the children, or cleaning up after the girl who got sick with diarrhea and vomit on the drive south.



I spent the first week in Oaxaca state in Bernardo's house in the city of Juxtlahuaca. As mentioned above, the family is originally from the town of Santa Ana. The family's land was on the edge of Santa Ana next to a village of a different tribe and they were under frequent armed attack from their neighbors, and frequently attacked those neighbors as well. The ongoing attacks were primarily related to land ownership and political affiliations – most people in Santa Ana support the Movement for Triqui Unification and Liberation, whereas the neighboring town supports the Institutional Revolution Party which had been in power in most of Mexico for over 70 years. Bernardo described the situation,

> "There have been many deaths. Oh! Many deaths! There was a 14 year old girl there [pointing toward the mountains where most Triqui people live], just a girl.

They got her before she went up the hill. Many fucked her. They fucked her, many! Then she was killed, very violent, many knife cuts. Then a teacher was killed there, where we went. Oh! The son of the head, head, Miguel, remember? I gave him soda? I was here [gesturing with his hand] and you were there next to Martin. His son they shot. Of the head, head. Then over there [gesturing with his hand] and there and there. Oh, many deaths. Maybe 8, maybe 10 in the last 2 months. Evil people, very evil. They kill between political parties.

There is a lot of danger here. If you say something and don't realize someone heard you and they are hidden, all of a sudden, 'pow!' or a knife and you are dead. I can't go out at night, even if we need something. Not at night, no! A lot of danger. There is a lot of danger here. During the day is fine. I go to the market of the doctor, but not at night. I have fear. A lot of danger, yes, yes."

Bernardo and Martin's family, along with many others, moved from Santa Ana to the nearby, small city of Juxtlahuaca to escape the violence. Many such town border wars are still going on in the Mixteca and Triqui Zones of Oaxaca. With the money Bernardo had made migrating to the United States, the family was able to build a house and start a very small store in Juxtlahuaca.

At night, after we drove into Santa Ana to visit, Bernardo asked me if I knew of any good medicine for his stomach. He explained that he has had stomach pain for approximately eight years. He stated, "My stomach does not like food any more. I don't have the desire (*ganas*) to eat. It hurts to eat." Before he goes to Alaska late each Spring, his doctor in Juxtlahuaca gives him a long series of vitamin shots and "shots to give me hunger" so that he has enough energy to work. When he returns from Alaska, he is weak and thin and is given another long series of the same shots to recover from the work. His description of his pain was punctuated by groans and accented by many hand gestures,

"It gives me such a pain! Right here [pointing with his hand], such a pain, and it goes up. ... It jumps and jumps like chords jumping, like this, like this [rapidly opening and closing his hands]. ... I wake up and my stomach hurts, ay! It was hard like this bench is hard. ... SO I mash my stomach with a soda bottle. I mash, mash, mash, mash here, mash here. And it helps a little. But, ay! I can't stand it. I can't eat! Nothing! Each time I eat it hurts, but it hurts. But I hold out [*me aguanto*], I hold out, and I hold out until work is over. It feels like it is twisting, twisting like so [rotating his hands]."

He has lost weight over the last several years and feels weak each morning at 5am when he goes to work his cornfields. He has to force himself to eat a tortilla and an egg before working his fields.

When I ask him why his stomach hurts, he says that it is because he has worked so hard all his life.

"I have my pains because of so much work, ay, so much work. I left for Veracruz to cut cane when I was 8. ... So much work all my life. Veracruz, Baja California, Washington, Oregon, California, Norte Carolina, ay! And now, 'laska. And here, the cornfield and the house, too. All my life I work a lot and, oh, one gets tired, gets tired, and the body hurts. In 'laska, we work 16 hours, no! 7 days a week, no rest for 2 months. Then maybe 10 hours or 8 hours a day 7 days a week for 2 more months. ... Ay! So much work!"

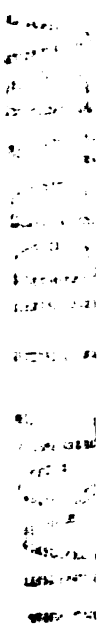
He has lived the migrant life since the age of eight, working from dawn till dusk seven days a week in northern Mexico and then the U.S., then returning to work hard on his family's land in Oaxaca state. "So much working (*tanto trabajar*) wears out a body," he says with a weak smile. "All that I have is from my work. I harvest the corn, cut the *zacate*, bind it all alone, alone. I am 62 or maybe 80. I don't know. This house, the land, all I worked to have. Who will feed me if I don't work? No one. My son [in the U.S.] sends no money. ... There is nothing here," he explains.

Yet, when I asked him more specifically why the pain started 8 years ago, he added another important fact.

> "Also, the soldiers, you know what soldiers are, right? Yes, the soldiers punched and kicked me many, many times. Punched like this [making a fist and punching into the air], here in my stomach. Ah! But many beatings [*chingadazos*]. ... Until there was blood all over. Because of the movement. People said rumors against us and the soldiers, the blue ones, came and beat me up."

Eight years ago, Bernardo was kidnapped and tortured by the Mexican federal police in charge of narcotics enforcement who are supported by U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency money. He was beaten several times put in prison. Here, he was allowed no medical help so that he resorted to drinking his own urine as a remedy to help his abdomen heal. Furthermore, he was denied food many of the days while in captivity. Members of the "blue military," as he calls them because of their uniform color, told him that he had been kidnapped under the suspicion that he was part of the MULT, even though the movement has nothing to do with drugs. After several months, the mayor of Juxtlahuaca wrote, signed and stamped an official paper stating that Bernardo had done no wrong and he was finally released from prison.

Like Abelino and Crescencio, Bernardo endures a form of suffering directly determined by social and political forces. The late modern system of unfettered capitalism has built global inequities, leading southern Mexico into a deepening economic depression. This poverty is one of the primary factors producing the local land-wars as well as the survival-seeking out-migration of able-bodied workers. The political alliances of the Mexican military, with its ties to the U.S. federal government via financing, have translated into a repression of the many movements seeking redistribution of power in a more equitable fashion. The torturing of members of indigenous rights movements by the military functions



not only to deepen Bernardo's own poverty and suffering, but also to reinforce the neoliberal economic scheme and thus deepen the poverty and suffering of millions of marginalized people. The logic behind these actions affirms that the poorest of the poor must not assert themselves or be allowed political economic power. The future of multinational commercial accumulation depends on it.

CONCLUSION

EMBODYING THE VIOLENCE CONTINUUM

The suffering of the Triqui migrant laborers is an embodiment of many forms of violence. The structural violence of global free market capitalism forces them to leave home and family members and suffer through a long and deadly desert border crossing in order to try to find the means for survival. The structural violence of labor hierarchies in the United States organized around ethnicity and citizenship position them at the bottom, with the most dangerous and back-breaking occupations as well as the worst accommodations. Due to their location at the base of the pecking order, the undocumented Triqui migrant workers endure more than their share of injury and sickness. Abelino's knee pain is a clear and direct result of structural violence, particularly as it drives him into repetitive, harmful movements and positions that practically guarantee physical deterioration, inflammation, aches, and tenderness. He is not given the option of other forms of work, like the "light" work in which he sees U.S. citizens engaged. National and local prejudices and assumptions further shape the hierarchy of labor such that the Triqui workers are treated with disrespect and racist insult. For the vast majority, their undocumented status leads to fear of redressing wrongs and of authority in general. These external and internalized symbolic violences not only

shore up the unequal labor hierarchies through normalization, but also lead to various forms of suffering, such as the intractable headaches of Crescencio. These headaches, in turn, lead back to the symbolic violence of stereotypes of Mexican migrant men as alcoholic and abusive. The specifics of symbolic violence on and around the farm will be covered further in Chapter Four. Finally, the Mexican military, enacts the violent fear of the powerful within free market capitalism at the prospect of this disenfranchised group of people organizing for economic, health, education and political rights. Bernardo's debilitating stomach pain began with the direct political violence of several well-places fist and boot blows to his stomach and was further potentiated by the structural violence requiring him to work long, difficult days in Alaska and Oaxaca in order to survive.

Of the four primary forms of violence discussed by Bourgois (2001), this leaves only everyday violence unconsidered. The next chapter focuses on the interactions of the Triqui workers with health care professionals. In these relationships, insult is added to injury in a manner reminiscent to the institutional everyday violence taken on by such social scientists as Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Basaglia (1987). Subsequently, the chapter will move on to consider the lenses of perception that direct well-meaning and humanitarian professionals to enact such violence.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE DOCTORS DON'T KNOW ANYTHING"
THE CLINICAL GAZE IN THE FIELD OF MIGRANT HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

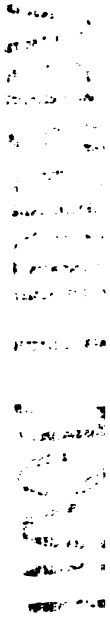
In the midst of deciding on my dissertation topic, as described in briefly in the Introduction, I visited the hometown of many of the Triqui migrant workers I had met in the Skagit Valley. The town, San Miguel, is located at approximately 9,000 feet elevation in the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico. It is listed in government documents as having approximately 3,000 inhabitants. During most of the year, however, roughly one half of the inhabitants are in the United States working.

Several years ago, Triqui migrant workers came to the U.S. only for the berry picking season in the summer and fall and then returned to San Miguel to help with the harvest and be home with family. Since 9/11 and the increasing militarization of the border with such government programs as Operation Gatekeeper, most Triqui migrants have taken to staying in the U.S. for 2 to 5 years at a time before returning. Most have a financial goal such as saving enough to build a house or to pay the bridewealth to get married. It has simply become too dangerous and financially costly to cross the border each year. Everyone in San Miguel knows someone who has died in the deserts of Arizona as well as someone who was kidnapped or robbed along the way. Each crossing costs close between $1,000 and $2,000 for rides, food, and a *coyote* (border crossing guide). Some of the migrants in their late teens and early 20s still return each year for the patron saint festival in early November and stay through Christmas. Thus, the population is largest in November and December and then

shrinks slowly as winter turns to spring and buses of Oaxacan people head to the border to risk the crossing.

During part of this first visit and again when I lived there for five months in the winter of 2003, I stayed with the family of Samuel, one of the men I knew well in the Skagit Valley. I lived with a man of "sixty or eighty" years of age who is Samuel's father, a woman of twenty-eight who is his sister, and four children between the ages of six and twelve who were all relatives too young to cross the border with their parents. We lived in a partially-finished concrete house of three rooms that was being constructed piecemeal as Samuel sent money home.

When I first arrived in San Miguel, as described in the Introduction, I presented myself to the town officials at *la presidencia* (town hall) and attempted to explain my reason for being there. I explained that I was hoping to live in town for several months to learn about the everyday life and health of the residents. The official in charge of legal issues (*el Síndico)* explained that there was no where to stay, no hotel or guest house, but that I could work in the *Centro de Salud* (government clinic) in town since it was short-staffed. This town has a small government funded clinic with a medical resident (*pasante*) or a nurse, though seldom both, on staff most days of the week. The *Síndico* told me that the nurse, Josefina, and the doctor, Juan, were both from Oaxaca City. The other two major Triqui towns had been downgraded by the federal government from being county seats and, therefore, had less funding for their clinics. My Triqui friends explained that there had been too much political organizing in the other Triqui towns and the Oaxacan state government had disciplined those towns by demoting them to being under primarily mestizo county seats nearby.



The implications of the *Síndico's* statement made me nervous that I might be pigeon-holed as a medical practitioner instead of an anthropology student and that I might be misunderstood as a fully-trained physician. I told him that I would be interested in observing the physician and nurse in town and assisting from time to time, but that I was there primarily as a student and that I could not practice on my own. He looked disappointed and confused. I told him that I was there primarily to observe and learn from the Triqui people about their lives and suffering. He still seemed confused or perhaps unconvinced that I could not fill a position at the clinic. I tried to explain that I had not finished my training as a physician and still needed to be supervised by a doctor who knows more than me. The *síndico* replied that "*ese médico no sabe nada*" (that doctor doesn't know anything).

This harsh statement took me aback. I wondered whether it was due to a difference in illness explanatory models between an indigenous Triqui person and an urban allopathic physician, an appropriate judgment of the lack of knowledge of a *pasante* not yet finished with his training, or a result of a further lack of knowledge or bedside manner on the part of the *médico.* I assumed, regardless of the final reason for the statement, that the account was specific to Juan and the situation in the *Centro* in San Miguel.

However, as I continued my fieldwork in Washington State, California, Arizona and returned to San Miguel in the tenure of a new *pasante*, I heard that *"los medicos no saben nada"* (the doctors don't know anything) in several contexts. I found this refrain quite disconcerting. First, I had assumed that because the physicians working with the Triqui people in migrant clinics or government funded clinics in Oaxaca had foregone prestige, state-of-the-art clinics, and higher salaries in order to work with this population that they would be appreciated. Second, I was in the midst of training to become not only an

anthropologist but also a physician and I wanted to work in both capacities with migrant laborers from Latin America. Why did the Triqui people consider that the physicians working with them knew nothing? What was wrong with the doctor-patient relationship here? How could it be changed to make it more helpful and valuable to my Triqui companions? What could I learn from this phenomenon for my future practice as a physician? How can anthropology speak to clinical medicine and medical education? These questions form the impetus for the work that went into researching and writing this chapter.

The last chapter left Abelino, Crescencio and Bernardo somewhat abruptly in the middle of their illness narratives with their injuries and pains untreated. That chapter considered the hierarchy of suffering at work in U.S. agricultural labor with specific attention paid to the suffering histories of these three people. The current chapter continues the stories of Abelino, Crescencio, and Bernardo as each of them seeks help from various health care providers in Washington, California and Oaxaca, Mexico. Utilizing these three stories as well as other interviews with clinicians, this chapter explores and analyzes the perceptions of the health professionals who work with migrant laborers in their clinics.

I will begin this chapter with a short discussion of the clinical gaze described by Michel Foucault (1994 [1963]). The chapter then explores the everyday lives, anxieties, and perceptions of health professionals who work with Mexican migrant laborers. Next, I will continue the narratives related to Abelino's knee, Crescencio's headache, and Bernardo's stomach pain as they interact with health professionals in Washington, California, and Oaxaca. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ways in which the clinical gaze has changed since Foucault's analysis. I argue that the addition of behavioral health education without a concurrent inclusion of social context in medical education has led

physicians beyond the gaze that naturalizes suffering to one that regularly blames the patients for their suffering.

THE CLINICAL GAZE

As a physician-anthropologist in training, I am concerned with how suffering can be alleviated in a more contextual, respectful, and egalitarian manner than biomedicine is known for. My dual training has been at once stimulating and disorienting. The lenses through which cultural anthropologists and physicians see the world are significantly different, even at times opposing. I have found the critical social analyses of anthropology incredibly important at the same time that I value the practical concerns of clinical medicine. Others at the crossroads of clinical medicine and anthropological analysis have offered valuable insights and methodologies. Most important have been Arthur Kleinman's writings on illness narratives and explanatory models (1988) as well as Paul Farmer's essays on structural violence and health as well as pragmatic solidarity (1997, 1998). Kleinman's work focuses on the somatization of social realities as well as the importance of listening to patient health beliefs. Farmer's writing drives home the importance of social determinants in health and calls for more equal distribution of Western medicine's resources. After accompanying my Triqui friends to migrant clinics, hospitals and traditional healers in several towns, my interest focuses on how health professionals perceive the suffering of their patients as well as the ways in which these modes of perception influence their interactions.

The most important work on the perceptions of medical professionals in the clinical encounter comes from Michel Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1994 [1963]). In this

book, Foucault describes what he calls "the gaze." He indicates that the clinical encounter changed drastically between the 18th and 19th Centuries.

> "This new structure is indicated—but not, of course, exhausted—by the minute but decisive change, whereby the question: 'What is the matter with you?', with which the eighteenth-century dialogue between doctor and patient began (a dialogue possessing its own grammar and style), was replaced by that other question: 'Where does it hurt?', in which we recognize the operation of the clinic and the principle of its entire discourse." Foucault 1994 [1963] p.xviii

Around the time of the advent of cadaveric dissection, the conception of disease transformed from an entity throughout the whole person to a lesion localized anatomically. It was no longer necessary for doctors to listen to patients describe their experience of the illness, their symptoms, in order to diagnose and treat. Instead, they began to focus on the isolated, diseased organs, treating the patient more and more as a body, an object. This narrow gaze ignores the social and personal realities of the patient and focuses in on their organs and pathologies. Within the paradigm of the clinical gaze, physicians examine and talk about the patient's diseases, while the patient is largely silent.

Since the time described by Foucault, many medical social scientists and health professionals have described clinical medicine's objectification of patients. The aphorism, "Ask not what disease the patient has; ask what patient has the disease," has been attributed to Sir William Osler.[1] This statement not only calls for recognizing the humanity of the patient, but also implies that patient objectification was prevalent in the 19th Century. In the mid-1990s, Tom Boyce, a pediatrician and sociobiologist, wrote,

> "For me, there is a growing unease that, in our headlong efforts to bring into focus finer and more discriminating views of the lesions lying *beneath* disease, we

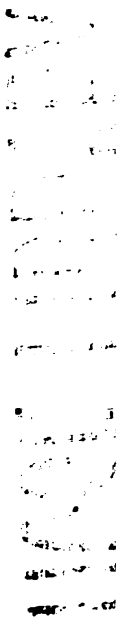
[1] This quote appears in various forms in different publications. For example, see J. Carrillo's "Cross-Cultural Primary Care" in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 18 May 1999, vol 130, no 10, pp. 829.

will have missed the opportunity to envision the person or the patient that lies *beyond* the disease." [Boyce 1994 144-5, emphasis in the original]

Boyce describes the clinical gaze as the "myopic vision" (145) that sees through the patient to focus on the lesion, the pathology. Boyce describes the ways in which his interactions between patients and their family members remind him of the patient's humanity.

Other authors discuss the consequences of the paradigm of the gaze for health professionals themselves. Hirshauer describes the ways surgery transforms all involved – patient, surgeon, nurse – into tools (1991). The rituals surrounding surgery depersonalize not only the patient, but also the health professionals. Yet, he implies that it is in this temporary, ritualistic depersonalization that the personhood of all involved is protected. Similarly, Lella and Pawluch describe the dehumanizing experience of medical students in the objectification of anatomy cadavers (1988). As the students objectify the human bodies they dissect, they experience their own dehumanization. The authors suggest that a space in medical education for "reflection on the cadaver and similar experiences" could promote attention to their own and their patients' humanity (Ibid. 146).

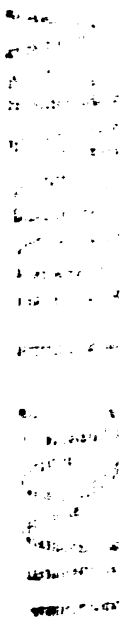
The clinical gaze is taught not only in the anatomy lab, but also through the models of doctoring presented to students. Melvin Konner, an anthropologist-physician, writes of his experiences as a medical student in *Becoming a Doctor* (1987). He indicates that, for the most part, the resident and attending physicians model survival skills and patient objectification instead of an interpersonal relationship with the patient. In the conclusion, Konner specifies that the doctor-patient relationship is not one of "I-Thou," as Martin Buber might have it, but rather one of "We-You" (Ibid. 365). This is meant to show the primacy of interactions among physicians and trainees. They form a medical team, a "Doctor-Doctor" relationship. Only after the team exists as a relational entity is there a relationship with the



patient. We may prefer to term this a "We-It" relationship to emphasize not only the primacy of the Doctor-Doctor relationship, but also to highlight the objectification of the patient. This can be seen also in Foucault's description of Charcot and the Salpetriere Clinic (Foucault 1990). Charcot paraded female patients in front of psychiatric trainees in order to teach about hysteria. He spoke about the patients, had them touched and prodded (specifically in their pubic areas), and had them taken them away if their poses became too sexual. In this way, the Doctor-Doctor relationship of Charcot and his trainees led to the objectification of the women to such a degree that they were hidden if they showed too recognizable a sign of their personhood.

Beverly Davenport (2000) describes a clinic for homeless patients that is a notable part of the training of medical students. This is a space of struggle between two medical paradigms, that which she terms "witnessing" as well as the medical gaze. "Witnessing," treating patients as whole persons, is taught in this clinic as conscious resistance to the medical gaze. In this article, physician-educators attempt to enact this humanizing model, all the while practicing within a system characterized by the biotechnical. At some points, they model witnessing to their students, while at others they model a myopic gaze on pathology.

In this chapter, I am interested in discovering how the analyses of the medical gaze by Foucault and others apply to the field of migrant health in the early 21st Century. What are the characteristics of the medical gaze within a contemporary migrant clinic? How do they relate to the relatively recent movement to make medical education more biopsychosocial? How do they relate to larger social and cultural forces? What is an alternative model for interactions and perceptions in the migrant clinic? The next section explores the social,



cultural, and phenomenological context within which clinicians in the field of migrant health work.

THE FIELD OF MIGRANT HEALTH

On Thanksgiving, 1960, CBS News broadcast a program entitled, "Harvest of Shame." This show was part of a national movement to raise awareness about the poor living and working conditions of what became known by governmental agencies and related researchers as "migrant and seasonal farm workers." At this time, most migrant farm workers were white people from the Midwest and black people from along the East coast.

Largely in response to this movement and the discussions it provoked, Congress passed the Migrant Health Act in 1962, which modified the Public Health Service Act in order to provide grants for a variety of medical and social services to these populations through the Migrant Health Program. Since the Act's passage, there has been controversy over the changing ethnic make-up of the farm laborers and whether or not to include Latin Americans in the definition of migrant and seasonal farm workers. Today, the terms, "farm worker" and "migrant worker" connote almost exclusively those of Latin American descent. The Migrant Health Program currently provides approximately $100 million support for over 400 Migrant Health Clinics in forty two states and Puerto Rico.

"Migrant health" has become recognized increasingly as a field within medicine and health services since the passage of the Migrant Health Act. This field is understood today to be the health care of migrant workers from Mexico and Central America. In 1984, the Migrant Clinicians Network (www.migrantclinician.com) was formed to link and educate

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clinicians who work with these populations. The Network currently has over 2,000 clinician members nationwide.

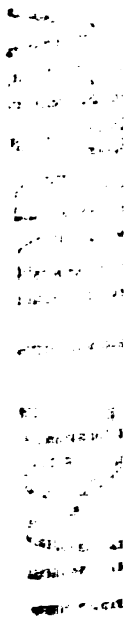
THE MIGRANT CLINIC

In each stage of my fieldwork, there was one primary medical institution with which my Triqui companions interacted around health-related issues. In the Skagit Valley of Washington State, there is a federally-funded migrant health clinic with five physicians, one nurse practitioner midwife, two health educators, six nurses, and several administrative staff. The physicians were made up of a white idealist who graduated from a top medical school; a white woman who grew up in South America as the daughter of Christian missionaries; a white mountaineer who chose to live in the area to be close to the North Cascades; a local woman of Central American descent; and a retired white man with weak Spanish language skills working on a locums (daily) basis. The nurses were mostly Latino/as from the area as well as a black woman who moved to the area to be close to family. There are two private dental clinics in the area to which most migrant patients are referred and where they receive a discount. The clinic charges were based on a sliding scale with most undocumented Mexican farm workers making well under the lowest threshold and, therefore, paying a $15 co-pay for each visit. Over the past several years, the clinic hours have been streamlined such that patients are seen only one day a week after 5pm. These changes in hours, as well as a commitment of the current Chief Medical Officer to treat all the area poor instead of just migrant farm workers, have seen a correlated decrease in the percentage of patients involved in farm work. On any given day, one would be just as likely to see poor, white, area residents as poor, Mexican, migrant workers in the clinic's waiting room.

In the Central Valley of California, there is one primary federally-funded migrant health clinic that my Triqui companions visited. It has four physicians, eight nurses, one dentist and several administrative staff. Most of the clinic staff are Latino/a people who grew up in the Central Valley and one physician is from South America and required to work at a federally-qualified community health center until his immigration documents are finalized. The clinic charges are based on a sliding scale with the lowest charge being a $30 co-pay. Most of the patients of this clinic are Latino/a area residents along with a significant number of Mexican and Central American migrant workers. My Triqui companions went to this clinic less often than they went in Washington state due to the co-pay being twice as much.

In San Miguel, Oaxaca, there is the federal Centro de Salud staffed alternately by a medical resident and a nurse, often with a day or two with no staff in between. Both the resident and the nurse are from Oaxaca City. Every resident is required to spend the year directly after graduating from medical school doing community service and is assigned a qualified clinic for this year. The nurse works for the federal government and is assigned a clinic for periods of five days at a time. A new medical resident comes to the clinic each year and the nurses are rotated at least once a year. Thus, there is little repoire built between the town and the clinic. Several Triqui families from the border areas of their towns have moved to larger, primarily mestizo cities in the state of Oaxaca due to the border violence related to land claims. In each of these cities, there are federal clinics as well as many private physicians with their own clinics.

In addition to visiting biomedical institutions when sick, my Triqui companions also patronize traditional Triqui healers. Because male patients are usually treated by male healers, each of the three Triqui healers I came to know over the course of my fieldwork



were men. There are female healers for female patients. One healer was a monolingual Triqui elderly father of the town síndico and lived in San Miguel all year round. One healer was a monolingual Triqui elderly man who picked berries in the Skagit Valley and pruned grape vines in California. The third was Crescencio, who had the excruciating headache described in the last chapter. He was an apprentice healer not yet widely recognized as a Triqui healer. This chapter will focus primarily on biomedical professionals in the field of migrant health, though there will be brief mention of concurrent and separate interactions with Triqui healers.

MIGRANT HEALTH CLINICIANS

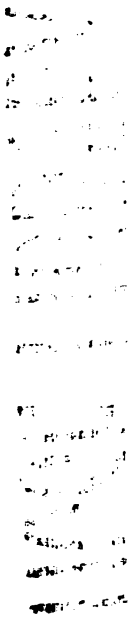
Medical professionals in the field of migrant health work under difficult circumstances on many levels. Most clinics serving migrant farm workers are non-profits with unreliable sources of funding and many lack state-of-the-art medicines and medical instruments. Physicians and nurses in these fields perform many duties for which they are not trained, from requesting free medicines for their patients to filling out paper work for discounted perinatal care for expectant mothers. These migrant populations they serve live and work in conditions that lead to injuries and disease. The clinicians often feel hopeless as they see young, healthy people come to the U.S. to work on farms and watch their health systematically decline. Dr. Samuelson, the physician in the migrant clinic in the Skagit Valley who moved to the area to be close to the North Cascades Mountains, spoke about the frustration of seeing his patients' bodies deteriorate over time.

> "I see an awful lot of people just wearing out, forty something or late thirties or early fifties. They are just worn out; they have been used and abused and worked physically harder than anybody should be expected to work for that number of years.

> Then they come out with this nagging back pain. You work it up and it is not getting better and you don't think there is any malingering going. It gets to the point where you just have to give them an MRI scan and their back is toast. In their early forties they have the arthritis of a seventy year old and they are not getting better.... They are told, 'sorry, go back to do what you are doing,' and they are stuck. They are screwed, in a word, and it is tragic."

Several clinicians in this field also pointed out the difficulties brought on by racism in the clinic waiting room. Several physicians and nurses spoke of white patients telling them such things as "I can't come during that time because I don't want to wait in the waiting room with those people," meaning Mexican migrant workers. Some white patients complain about the smell of the farm workers after picking, some complained that they always brought their children with them, and some go so far as to threaten that they will not come back if they were treated the same as the migrant workers.

Only approximately 5% of undocumented migrants nationwide have health insurance and most do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare due to their immigration status (Villarejo 2004; Migration News 2004). This means not only that the clinic is reimbursed for very few of the services it provides, but also that continuity of care and of medications is practically impossible. The low level of reimbursements mean that these clinics must constantly apply for grants from various public and private sources in order to stay afloat. Given the uneven levels of funding, clinic administrators must cut important programs from time to time when funding is low. In addition, physicians and nurses in this field spend a lot of time working hard to get samples or donations of medicines needed by their patients. I observed interactions in the migrant clinics one or two days a week in each stage of my fieldwork and every time was impressed with how much time and effort many of the physicians and nurses spent to get medicines for his patients. Dr. Goldenson, the South American physician in the



migrant clinic in California, tells me about a patient of his who got Valley Fever (Coccidiomycosis) from working so close to the dirt of the Central Valley. Valley Fever, a potentially fatal lung infection, is caught from breathing in soil and is, therefore, a hazard for those people working most directly with the soil, like berry pickers. Dr. Goldenson has had two patients with Valley Fever over the past three years. Both of them will require suppression therapy for life with an anti-fungal anti-biotic. He tells me the details of one of the patient's progress,

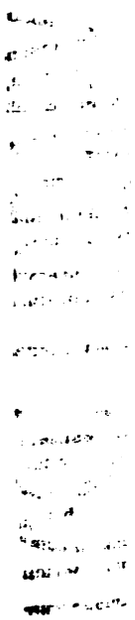
> "He's not doing as well.... But at least he's surviving. Basically, he's going to need $1,000 a month of Diflucan for life. I mean, of course this guy cannot afford even $100 a month. So far, we were able to get Medical to cover for it although every month I have to go through re-approvals.... I mean, quite often I have spent more time trying to get samples from here and there. I'm calling friends. I'm asking for extra samples or trying to look for special programs. I mean, it's a lot of work, but you feel good about it, because these are people that really appreciate that."

The need to make enough money to survive and the lack of flexibility in farm work schedules mean that it is difficult for migrant farm workers to take time off to go to the clinic during the day. These phenomena encourage migrant laborers to wait until they are very sick before going to the clinic and force laborers to miss appointments on days when picking goes later than expected. Clinicians told me on several occasions how difficult it was to treat migrant workers effectively given the fact that these patients do not make use of preventive services and often miss appointments. Continuity of care is also very difficult to attain due to the fact that most migrant workers move to different towns every few months. This means that a new source of discounted or free medicines will need to be found by the clinicians in the next town. Dr. McCaffree, a 30-something, female physician in the Skagit migrant clinic who grew up as a child of missionaries in South America told me, "Most [migrants] don't

have any insurance so that's even harder 'cause you start them on a medication and you know they are just going to be off it again wherever they go next." The migratory nature of the lives of farm workers means that their medical records are extremely patchy. Each clinic has at least one medical record for each patient that covers only the seasons during which they lived in that area. Many clinics have more than one record for each patient due to confusion over whether the record should be alphabetized by the maternal or paternal last name or simply careless transcription of names in Spanish.

Language differences also complicate the field of migrant health. Most clinicians are bilingual in English and Spanish, however some, like the locums doctor in the Skagit Valley, need a translator with Spanish speaking patients. Often those with poor Spanish language skills do not make the effort to get a translator and instead conduct the appointment in English that the patient cannot understand or with an inappropriate interpreter such as the patient's young child during a gynecological exam. One Triqui patient I know gave premature birth to a baby girl. The nurses wrote "patient refuses breast pump," though they did not have a translator with them when they had the interaction that brought them to this conclusion. I can only imagine what the Triqui mother thought they were asking as they made gestures toward her breasts with the plastic and metal machine.

Very few migrant clinics offer services in languages other than Spanish or English. The hospital in the Skagit Valley, where my Triqui friends went when they needed inpatient services, offers Mixteco translation through a local language non-profit. However, sometimes a Mixteco translator is called when hospital staff hear that a patient is from Oaxaca, even if the patient speaks only Triqui or Mixe or Zapotec. The nurse practitioner midwife tells me about the ways in which language differences lead to worse health care,



> "There are a lot of staff who don't want to be bothered getting a trained interpreter. People grab me and say, 'oh, could you be an interpreter?' This person has a right to get a real interpreter and not a five-minute discussion with me when I am running from patient to patient. It is just reluctance. It is just that one more step. It is racism. It is being overworked because our system is a total train wreck right now. Are you sure you want to be a doctor?"

Several clinicians mentioned that it is especially hard to communicate with Oaxacan women. Less Triqui women have gone to school in San Miguel than Triqui men such that several Triqui women do not speak Spanish. In addition, clinicians complain that Oaxacan women speak quietly and will not look them in the eyes when they speak.

Sometimes assumptions about language and complacency about interpretation have had even more dire consequences. One Triqui man named Adolfo Ruiz-Alvarez was held in an Oregon state mental hospital and medicated for over two years after being charged of trespassing and public indecency and interviewed by interpreters only in Spanish (Davis 2002). Apparently, because he could not communicate in what was considered his native language, he was assumed to be crazy. While I do not know the details of the court case, I recognize that several times while homeless in California during my fieldwork I could have been charged with public indecency for relieving myself in a public park after the public toilets were closed at sundown. A Mixteco man named Santiago Ventura Morales was charged with murder without appropriate Mixtec translation and held in an Oregon state prison for four years before a non-profit advocating for indigenous Mexicans provided interpretive services that eventually led to his case being overturned (*Ibid.*).

As seen above, health professionals in the field of migrant health work in difficult circumstances and often feel hopeless at the magnitude of the problems they face. Dr. Goldenson explained that,

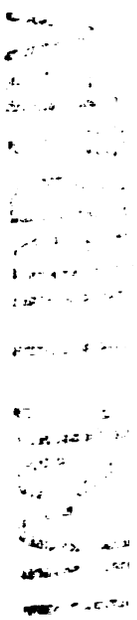
[illegible]

"It's a very difficult problem to be fixed. Right now, we have a pretty bad insurance crisis and health care crisis. I mean, other people cannot really afford health care, we are having problems with citizens and – the migrant workers, I truly believe that they should have the same access, at least, as the other ones. I mean, this work that they are doing is something that nobody else is willing to do. That's the truth. You know, probably that's the only reason why we are able to go to the supermarket and buy some fruit for a fair price. Because otherwise, we're hit with all the worker's comp. problems and paying higher wages and the price would be a lot worse. So this is a group of people that really deserve our attention."

Clinicians in the field of migrant health work in difficult environments that require extra work procuring medicines, dealing with racism from their white patients, and working in several languages, all the while lacking reliable resources. At the same time that most health professionals in this field feel overworked and powerless to change the structural forces causing health problems for their patients, they also feel a commitment to work with this population. Many voiced feeling that Latin American migrant farm workers deserved high quality health care and most described feeling a personal sense of calling to give quality health care to this population.

THE GAZE OF MIGRANT HEALTH CLINICIANS: WASHINGTON AND CALIFORNIA

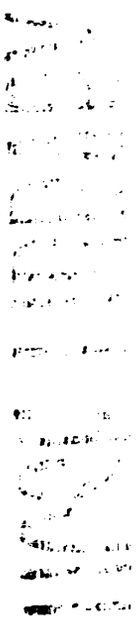
The importance of perception in social interactions cannot be overstated. Social scientists have shown the significance of social perception in diverse contexts, from the effects of representations of "the poor" in international development (Sachs 1991), to the results of symbolic linkages between gender hierarchies and immune system cells in medical science (Martin 1992), to the consequences of class-related meanings of smell in the rural



U.S. (Orwell 1937). As will be discussed further in the next chapter, Pierre Bourdieu explains that "being is being perceived" (1997). In other words, each person is defined through perception by others. This perception determines the actions of the other people toward this person, thus shaping also the actions of this person herself – in response to the others' actions and insofar as her potential actions were determined by the actions of others – as well as the material conditions in which she lives – insofar as those conditions are continually produced by social actions on larger, political economic and smaller, intimate scales.

The experiences of suffering and sickness of Triqui migrant farm workers are significantly shaped by responses from medical professionals in the field of migrant health. Understanding these medical responses to Triqui suffering requires an analysis of the lenses through which these health professionals perceive their Triqui patients as well as the suffering of these patients. As the ethnographic data below indicates, these perceptions go from positive to neutral, negative to outright racist.

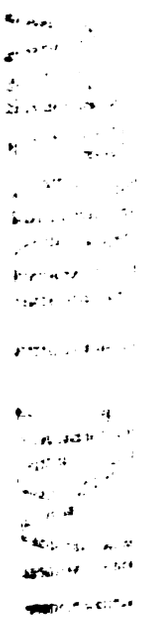
Several medical professionals working in migrant clinics indicated that migrant farm workers are a group deserving assistance and enjoyable to work with, as evident in the quote from Dr. Goldenson above. The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the migrant clinic in the Skagit Valley told me that the migrant workers who cross into the U.S. are "the stars" of Mexico. The midwife in the same clinic told me that they are "the best and the bravest" of Mexico because they are the successful ones in crossing the border and looking for work in the U.S. Dr. McCaffree told me she was continually "amazed by how [farm workers] keep going" and how they "seem happy and content" despite their difficult lots in life. Several clinicians told me that Mexican farm workers complain less than white patients about their



sicknesses and use less public resources like clinic services, welfare, and worker's compensation. Multiple times, physicians and nurses told me that the migrant farm workers were more respectful and their children more well-behaved than the white patients in their clinic and that the Oaxacan people (indigenous Triqui and Mixteco people) were especially respectful.

However, clinicians also had complaints about their farm worker patients. One of the nurses in the Skagit Valley told me that "they don't really take care of themselves." She continued explaining that they needed education on how to take care of their bodies. Dr. Goldenson explained to me that Mexican migrants "don't think they need medicines." As an example, he told me that they often misunderstand the results of untreated diabetes and come to the conclusions that diabetes treatments, like insulin, cause the sequellae of the disease, like blindness. Several physicians also complained about the beliefs of Mexican patients in culture-bound syndromes, like susto, and in traditional healers. Some clinicians blamed the poor health outcomes of their patients on these beliefs and seeking remedies related to these beliefs. Johanna, the midwife at the Skagit migrant clinic, told me that she had invented a cure for susto, with which she has seen great success. The cure involved chamomile tea and rest from household chores. She went on to explain some other difficulties she had working with Mexican migrant farm workers.

> "One of the most interesting aspects of working with a Spanish-speaking patient is just this real disinclination to want to be specific and quantify. It is just enormous, I don't know if you have tried to get a history out of somebody but if you ask somebody, 'how long has this been bothering you? Or where does it hurt? or what can you tell me about your problem?' what you are going to get is one big basket full of vague stuff. If I asked you, let's say you are having a stomachache and, for example, I ask you what is going on and you say, 'well, it started on Monday and



> it feels like this and I have these associated symptoms.' You and I would be on the same wavelength and that would be very helpful to me. I would be so grateful that you could exactly explain what is going on. In Mexican people, almost to the person, no matter how long you have known them, you are going to get something that is very vague, like, 'a while ago, it kind of hurts here, it feels like vaguely aching,' typically minimizing the symptoms. It is just really hard to get a good history and there are a lot of ideas that I have...."

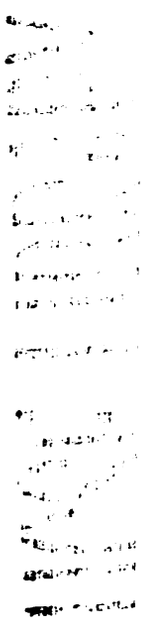
She continued that she thinks this problem relates to a lack of good health care in Mexico and a religious shame at sickness being related to personal sin or moral failing.

Most clinicians indicated that the primary health problems of migrant farm workers included diabetes, body pain from work, work-related injuries and dental problems. The CMO of the migrant clinic in Washington State stated that in response to her question, "are you okay?", many of her migrant patients often reply, "well, it all hurts, but that's just the way it is." A retired dentist told me that Mexican people wait a long time to go into the dental clinic so that the problems are serious and he often had to extract the teeth. He explained also that working with Mexican patients was difficult due to bodily differences.

> "It's genetics," he said, "their bone structure's just different; it's like your trying to pull the tooth out of granite. You pray it'll lift, your right arm gets about three times the size of your left. You'll see that in a lot of Mexican people, you know, big jaws or real heavy bone structure. Northern Europeans have much lighter features."

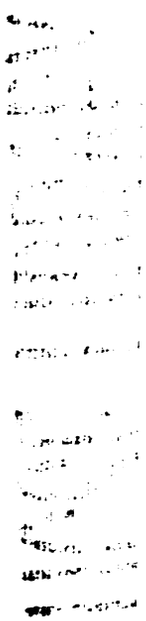
The physicians in the migrant clinics told me that the common dental problems were due to giving too much juice in bottles to the children.

Johanna, the midwife, described that she sees a lot of domestic violence perpetrated by the men against their wives. She explained her theory that much of this violence comes from deep disappointment on the part of the men with unmet expectations in coming to the



U.S. Some of the nurses in the same clinic, however, told me that there is very little domestic violence among migrant farm workers. Dr. McCaffree added that she sees a high rate of unwed pregnancy and a high rate of depression. The depression, she told me, is masked as alcoholism in the men and as vague aches and pains in the women. All of the other clinicians told me that the migrant workers had lower rates of substance abuse than their U.S. citizen patients. Dr. McCaffree's nurse explained that she sees a lower incidence of depression among the migrant patients than the white area resident patients. In addition, there is often a misunderstanding about marriage between health professionals and their Triqui patients. The vast majority of Triqui people engage in traditional partnering practices, which involve the male paying a bridewealth of approximately $1,500 in San Miguel or $2,500 in the U.S. to the family of their fiancée. Most couples do not engage in an official Church or state wedding. The legal status of this partnering, then, is complicated because the couples do not fill out governmental marriage forms, yet the Triqui tribe is legally autonomous and recognizes these traditional marriages. Thus, many of the "unwed pregnancies" cited by Dr. McCaffree are likely not so simply categorizable.

Beyond the common invalidation of Triqui marriage by health professionals as described above, another intercultural and legal problem surrounding Triqui marriage relates to the ages of the couple. Triqui males routinely marry between the ages of 16 and 20, while their female partners are often between the ages of 14 and 18. According to Triqui people and migrant health clinicians in Washington State and California, the following is a routine occurrence. A Triqui couple goes to the hospital for the wife to give birth to her first child. During the patient interview, the nurses or social workers utilize simple definitions to determine that the couple is not legally married and then go on to discover that the woman is



under 17 years of age and the man is 17 years of age or older. The hospital staff then make contact with law enforcement agencies, contact that is required by law in some states. The woman is placed in custody of a relative or the court and the man is convicted with the felony of statutory rape. He is then put in prison for up to 10 years in some states (Quinones 1998). However, the nursing staff chose not to report the Triqui couples I observed through their first child's birth, though they had undergone a traditional marriage and the ages were as described above. The nursing staff considered the story laid out above to be a cruel misunderstanding.

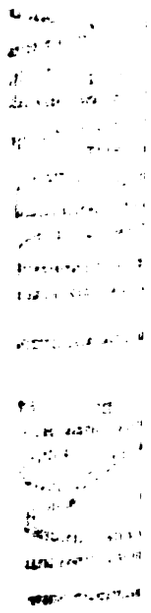
The Chief Medical Officer of the clinic in the Skagit Valley told me that approximately 75% of worker's compensation claims by white or Mexican people are just people "trying to work the system." She went on to explain that many migrants in Texas and California move to Washington State because they know the public health plan is good. On a similar note, several of the welfare agents in Madera, California, told me that there are signs all over Oaxaca telling people to go to Madera because they can get welfare there. Over the course of my fieldwork, however, I never heard a single Mexican migrant mention welfare or health plans as a reason for their migration. In fact, the vast majority of my Triqui companions did not qualify for Washington State's health plan or California's welfare program because they are undocumented. Some Triqui families applied for and received basic short-term perinatal nutritional support, though this support proved to be minimal and the process extremely time consuming.

The CMO of the clinic explained that Mexican people in the U.S. mis-use the health care system by trying to get multiple opinions on their sicknesses and the appropriate treatments. Dr. Samuelson, the physician at the same clinic who sees the most work-related

injury cases, contradicted the CMO. Samuelson sees many of the Spanish-speaking independent medical exams for worker's compensation in the area. He explained that the language barrier in most of the medical exams causes problems with testing the reliability of the patient. He also explained that the farm workers have a different mindset about pain and "this is not allowed in the [worker's compensation] industry." Specifically he stated that "they don't have pain, they suffer pain," though he did not elaborate. He explained other problems with worker's compensation tests like "light stroking that should not cause pain, but if they pull away it is interpreted as being faking pain, while in reality it is fear of pain. So, I will go through the same exam and get completely different results. But the suspicions of malingering have already been raised." For the very few undocumented migrants who file worker's compensation claims due to work injuries, this suspicion leads to problems in their files.

The health professionals with whom I interacted often noticed other differences between the Oaxacans and other Mexican migrant farm workers. Several physicians and nurses pointed out that their Oaxacan patients are poorer than their other patients. Dr. McCaffree told me, "They seem a lot poorer and, so, they don't have access [to heatlh care]. ... Their clothes are a little bit dirtier. They tend to be a lot thinner and not much obesity and clothes that don't get changed a lot." On many occasions, clinicians told me that Oaxacans have worse health status than other groups. One told me, "they're just sicker and have more body pains."

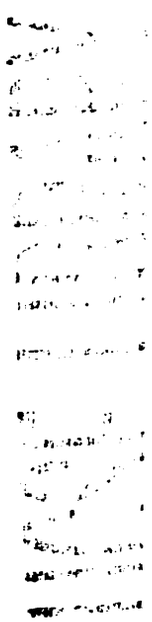
Clinicians in the field of migrant health in Washington State and California hold a variety of beliefs about their Mexican migrant patients. These physicians and nurses consider them to be respectful, tough, and deserving of quality health care. At the same time,



they see the migrant workers as frustrating to work with due to their traditional health beliefs and vague medical histories. Many clinicians make ethnocentric assumptions about their patients, such as about the reality of their marriages. Different clinicians hold contradictory views regarding the prevalence of substance abuse, depression, and use of worker's compensation services in this population. However, these health professionals seem to agree in blaming certain health conditions, such as dental problems, on the bodily make-up – bone structure like "granite" – and behavior – parents giving too much juice to their children – of their patients. Several of these general perceptions are echoed in the health clinics serving these same Triqui people in Oaxaca.

THE GAZE OF MIGRANT HEALTH CLINICIANS: SAN MIGUEL, OAXACA

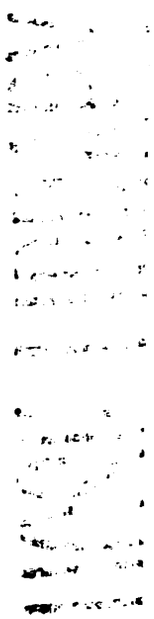
Over the course of my fieldwork, I observed and interviewed the doctors and nurses who worked in the federally-funded Centro de Salud (Health Center) in San Miguel. The Centro consisted of a small entryway that doubled as a waiting room with six chairs, a small examination room, a small room for sick patients to stay over night on one of two beds (though I never saw this room used), a small bathroom with a flush toilet and a shower for only clinic staff, a small kitchen only for clinic staff and a small bedroom for clinic staff to sleep in. The bathroom is supplied water through a large black barrel on the roof. The barrel is supplied with water by the women of the town who are poor enough to be part of the federal *Oportunidades* program, formerly known as *Progresa* (see Sesia 2001 for background). This program provides regular, small amounts of money, disbursed through the Centro, for food and school clothing for their children. Centro staff require that the



women who are enrolled in this program bring a bucket of water in exchange for their disbursements. The Centro was officially open seven days a week for drop-in care from 8 to 2 and from 4 to 6pm and 24 hours a day, seven days a week for emergency care. However, at least half of the times I went to the clinic, including during drop-in hours, the clinic doors were locked and no one answered to my knocks.

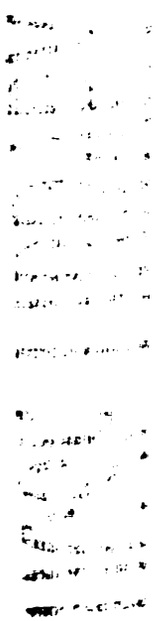
In the waiting area of the Centro hang three large posters for everyone to see. One is a map of the small town with each family's house hand-drawn and marked for the presence of such sicknesses such as tuberculosis, diabetes, miscarriage, malnutrition. One poster is titled, "10 Rights of Patients" (CONAMED), and lists such things as "Receive dignified and respectful attention; Decide freely about your medical attention; Decide whether or not to give your consent for risky procedures; Be treated with confidentiality; Receive medical attention in the case of urgency." The last poster is titled, "Decalogue of the Good Patient" (Grupo Autocolor de Oaxaca), and includes such things as "Have confidence in your doctor and take the treatments they prescribe; Know that the Health Center is yours and you should take care of it; Ask the doctor how to make it so you do not have more children; Be respectful with the doctors and nurses; Keep yourself and your house clean." The following ethnographic vignettes demonstrate how that these contradictory views of the physician-patient relationship compete with each other in everyday clinical interactions.

The doctors and nurses I met at the Centro de Salud in San Miguel over the course of my fieldwork perceived Triqui people in several specific ways. The Centro had recently prepared a summary report on the health of the town of San Miguel. The nurse who prepared it listed "lack of family planning by the families" and "not accepting the taking of cervical cytology [Pap smears]" as the two most important health problems in San Miguel. I asked



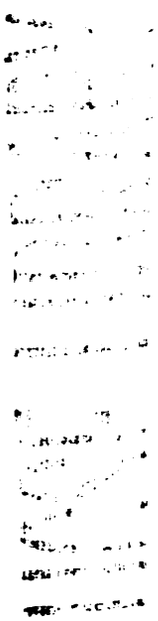
the nurse what this meant and she explained, "They don't give in to it easily." The report listed "culture and customs" as the reasons for these two problems. The report lists 33.6% illiteracy as another important problem and charges that this is "due to the fact that fathers of families prefer that their children dedicate themselves to the fields than to finishing their primary education.... Sometimes the father of the family takes the children to the states of Culiacan, Sinaloa, Hermosilla, Ensenada, U.S.A." A third problem listed in the report is "housing" and explains that "promiscuity exists in this population because in some houses, three families live together." The nurse explains that this crowded housing is due to "customs of the population." For the problem of "pollution," the nurse blames "burning garbage" and "not always using latrines." In all of these examples, Triqui behavior and culture are blamed for health problems and social context is ignored. For example, is refusing a Pap smear really a more important health-related problem than childhood death due to poverty-related malnutrition and comorbid diarrheal disease? Is it valid to state that parents "prefer" that their children work? Would it not be more precise to say that parents are practically forced to have their children work in order to survive in the midst of international and domestic economic inequalities? Likewise, I wonder why the nurse lists "burning garbage" instead of "lack of garbage collection services" as causing pollution.

Every week that I observed interactions in the Centro, the nurse or doctor present told at least one Triqui mom that her child was malnourished. They routinely said things like, "if you feed them more tacos and less chips (*Sabritas*), we wouldn't have this problem," though I never heard them check to see if the family ever bought chips or even had money to buy *Sabritas* brand chips. On one such instance, the nurse castigated a Triqui mother, "Oh, woman, woman! What are we going to do?! Your girl is one year and seven months old and



weighs what a girl of six months should weigh! Woman!" In the midst of these interactions, the nurses and physicians use the "tu," informal version of the word, "you," while the patients respond with the "usted," formal version of the word. The Centro is required by government policy to weigh and measure each child categorized as malnourished every month until they are well nourished. However, the malnutrition index is based only on weight and height and was developed in Mexico City in a mestizo population with a higher average body mass and height. In front of several Triqui people in the waiting room of the Centro, one of the nurses acknowledged that this index does not work well with indigenous people though it is still required by the health department. Here, a medical index developed ethnocentrically is applied inappropriately to another group in such a way that the patients are shamed for irrelevant and assumed behaviors. This is a perfect example of structural medical racism at work.

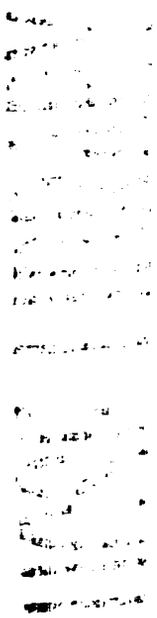
After this nurse explained to me in Spanish the problems with the nutrition index, she went on to tell me, still in front of the people in the waiting room, that "I don't like it here and I want to leave." She said that she would stay if the Triqui people paid attention to her and thanked her. During this conversation, she saw the patients in the waiting room without taking them into the examination room for privacy. One of them had flu-like symptoms with aches and pains, fever, cough and a runny nose. The nurse explained to me in front of all those in the waiting room that the Centro was not stocked with very many kinds of medicines, such that she had to give him just a pain pill "because that's all I have," even though she knew that would not help. After she saw these patients, she told those waiting outside that she was closing because she had papers to do. She closed and locked the front doors, pulled the blinds, and turned on music (as did the other nurse and both of the doctors),



despite the fact that the schedule on the front door indicated that the clinic was still open for the next several hours. She did not respond the few times I heard knocks at the door of the clinic.

She took me into the back room and made herself and I a tripe mole lunch and continued,

> "I talked with a friend of mine who is a psychologist and she told me to find something I like here and think about it. I've looked a lot and haven't found anything I like. The land I don't like; neither the climate; the people even worse! The people here are lazy, dirty, ignorant, mean, gossipers. I used to work in another town where the people were clean. Yes, there was running water there, but, still, the people were clean and combed their hair! Here, the women just pee wherever they want to. No wonder they have respiratory illnesses here if they pee everywhere and then the wind blows dust around. I told a woman to comb her daughter's hair so that she would look pretty and the women said, 'No, that is not good; we are Triqui.' The people here are traitors, don't trust them, Set'. They might kill you because you say 'hi' to someone and don't remember to say 'hi' to someone else. I used to work in a town where the climate, the people were warm. Now, I am with cold people. Why would I want a friendship with an indigenous person? I need nothing from them!
>
> I used to think the indigenous people were so poor and fucked and poor. Now, I know they are just lazy and dirty. I used to want to give my life to help them even if they didn't pay me and even if they didn't thank me. Now, I won't give my time for a *pueblo* (indigenous town) or even a peso. Not even one peso! That is bad, huh? But I won't give a minute or a peso for an indigenous person. They don't deserve me and they don't deserve my friendship.
>
> Do you know why Mexico has a very big debt and doesn't build roads or anything? It all goes to the *pueblos* so they can have medicines. It all goes to the pueblos.
>
> And, furthermore, they don't know how to cook! Sometimes, when I give seminars about nutrition, I ask them to bring pumpkin or squash and meat and I try to



> teach them to make tamales, but they don't want them and they don't bring the food to cook with. I tell them to make more *rellenos* or *masitas* or *mole* and they don't even know how to make it! All these plants out here, from radish to mustard greens, they boil the leaves and eat them. That's their whole world!"

The nurse finished lunch by telling me that she has found one older Triqui woman who is very nice to her and tries to get her to learn Triqui and even cooks for her sometimes.

This quote shows the lack of awareness of social context also seen many times above. For example, the comments about cleanliness do not acknowledge how much work goes into bathing in San Miguel. In San Miguel, one must hike to the bottom of the hill and carry from seven to fifteen buckets of water back home from the well each day. This water is used for cooking, watering the animals, drinking, washing, and bathing. In addition, one must hike several miles into the communally owned forest, cut firewood with a machete, and carry it back home. One must also hike to a nearby river and wash one of the few changes of clothes they own. Next, the firewood is used to make a fire big enough to cook meals, simmer corn in order to make *masa* and tortillas, sanitize drinking water via boiling, and prepare water warm enough to bathe in the cold air of this mountain village. Next, the bather has to find a location somewhat private without dirtying the inside of the house and without making so much mud that the bath is in vain. Because of all the work involved, I bathed at most once a week while in San Miguel. The Centro staff bathed everyday in the shower's running water that had been carried regularly by the women of San Miguel. The quote also shows outright racism toward indigenous people from ethnocentric assumptions in cooking to pejorative name-calling.

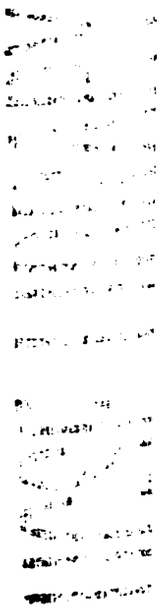
After I returned from my trek across the U.S.-Mexico border, the former nurse had been asked to leave by the town leaders because she took too much vacation. The new nurse

was a friendly woman also from Oaxaca City. I went in to the Centro for the first time with a Triqui friend, Nicolas, I met in Washington State. Nicolas was trying to get her help organizing the health-related documents to apply for residency in the U.S. She replied, "Well, I don't know if you really work hard [in the U.S.] like you say, but I'll see what I can do." While Nicolas was there, the nurse then told me several times that she was evangelical. She told me that the Triqui people are mostly Catholic and that,

> "Here, Catholic means that they pray to images of wood and iron and steel and who knows what else. We just pray wherever we are to the God who is alive, the God who made the wind and the sun. Catholic means you can do whatever you want. You can drink and have lovers and you have lots of fiestas, you celebrate birthdays and other days all the time."

She went on to tell me, "the customs of the Triquis are virgin; they haven't been changed by anything. They are still the same as they have always been. Some of the Triqui *pueblos* are *pueblos* without laws, they just have customs." She, then, asked me, "So, you are thinking of crossing the border? For them [motioning with her hand toward the Triqui *pueblo*], it is just another adventure, like a lot of their lives are an adventure. You should take some snake anti-venom, though." This nurse showed various forms of prejudice, specifically those focused around religion, dismissal of Triqui suffering, and racist assertions of indigenous simplicity.

The nurse went on to tell me, still in front of Nicolas, that a baby died in San Miguel a week ago. Apparently, the mother told her that she had brought the baby to the Centro and the doctor thought the baby had a cold and gave her some pills. The nurse added, "babies can't really swallow pills, anyway." Later, several times as the baby got worse, the mother tried to find the doctor, but he did not answer the door of the clinic. She took the baby to a nearby mestizo town, Tlaxiaco, and the baby died in the hospital from complications of a



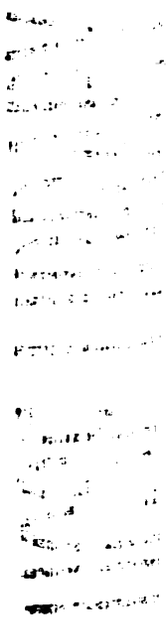
respiratory infection. "If we were working in a *ciudad* (mestizo city), instead of a *pueblo*, he would be in jail. If we were both there and gave only little pills (*pastillitas*), we would both be in jail."

A few days later, the nurse returned to Oaxaca City for her weekend and the doctor returned to San Miguel. The doctor complained to me that the Triqui people do not come into the clinic often enough. To illustrate his point, he told me, "there was a mother who took her baby all the way to Tlaxiaco last week instead of bringing him to me and the baby died because it took so long to get there." He, then, complained about how the Triqui people are always gossiping and starting rumors about him not being in the Centro.

The clinicians in San Miguel work in the difficult environment of a clinic that lacks medicines and medical instruments. They are required by the federal government to travel several hours away from their friends and family for several days each week to work in a town where the people speak a different language. Like the clinicians in Washington State and California, they lack awareness of the social forces impinging on the health and well-being of their patients. Instead, they blame the culture and behaviors of their patients for their suffering. They are given ethnocentric metrics of malnutrition and employ them harshly. They are given impunity for malpractice due to the relative lack of political power and knowledge of their patients. Finally, they perceive their patients through racist metaphors of dirtiness, violence, and laziness that lead them to believe their patients do not deserve extra effort.

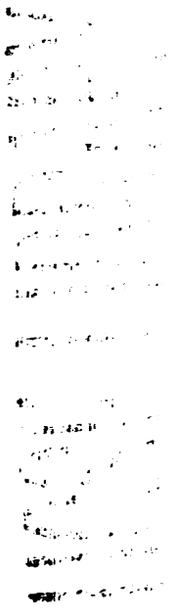
THE CONTEXT OF MIGRANT SUFFERING:

ABELINO'S KNEE



Two days after Abelino's knee accident described in the last chapter, an extremely heavy, cold downpour caused work to be canceled on the farm. Abelino and I went into an urgent care clinic. Abelino ended up seeing several doctors and a physical therapist over the next several months, usually without a translator in Spanish, never in Triqui. During these months, he limped around camp, taking care of his kids while his wife and eldest daughter continued to pick in the fields.

The urgent care doctor listened to Abelino's description of what had happened and examined his swollen right knee. He explained that Abelino should not work picking berries, emphasizing that Abelino should rest and let his knee recover. This physician was not sure if the knee pain was due to a sprain of a ligament or a meniscus tear and planned for further evaluation once the pain had subsided somewhat. Abelino asked for an injection, a common method of administering medicine in Mexico and the doctor refused. Instead, he gave Abelino a referral to physical therapy, an anti-inflammatory medicine, and instructions on icing his knee regularly. He ordered an X-ray of Abelino's knee, which showed that Abelino's bones had not broken, but could not show anything about the soft tissue, tendons, bursa, menisca. The report from the X-ray concluded, rather simplistically, "normal right knee." This urgent care physician also filled-out the paperwork to open a worker's compensation claim with the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries (LNI) without inquiring about Abelino's immigration status. Two days later, Abelino went in to see the physical therapist, who performed his own evaluation of the knee. At this point, Abelino described his knee pain as a 7 on a scale with 10 being the worst pain he could imagine. The physical therapist gave Abelino knee exercises to do at home and recommended a consultation with an orthopedic specialist.



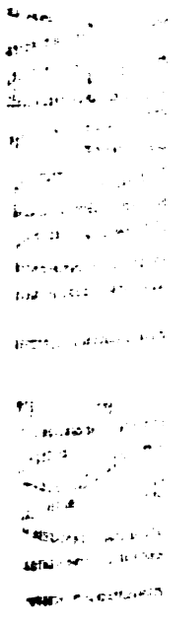
The next week, when Abelino and I went into the clinic for his appointment, the original urgent care doctor was not on duty, so we saw one of his partners. This physician looked at Abelino's chart, listened briefly to Abelino tell him what had happened, and told Abelino that he could work what he called "light duty," provided he did not bend, walk or stand. This doctor filled out a form to this effect and gave it to Abelino to take to his employer. The doctor explained the cause of injury in the chart as "while picking, twisted his right knee." This description is not only vague, but also linguistically makes Abelino the implied subject who twisted the direct object, his right knee. Although Abelino has chronic gastritis such that he cannot eat spicy traditional Triqui food, this physician wrote in his chart, "[patient] also specifically states he has no GI upset from taking NSAID [non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are known to aggravate gastrointestinal problems]." No future health professional working with Abelino double-checked this assertion. The physician gave Abelino a brace and instructed him to wear it. Abelino later told me that the brace made the pain worse, so he wore it only twice. That afternoon, Abelino went to the farm office to ask for lighter work. The bilingual receptionist, Samantha, told him in a frustrated tone, "No, because no (*No, porque no*)," and would not let him talk with anyone else.

In the meanwhile, Abelino also consulted a Triqui healer. This elderly, monolingual man who worked during the day picking strawberries, saw Abelino at night in his labor camp shack. I sat in on the consultation and Abelino translated for me. The healer shuffled and rearranged a deck of cards several times in order to understand what had been happening. He let Abelino know that the spirit of a person Abelino had seen die had attached to him. In order to get rid of the spirit and heal his patient, the Triqui healer covered several raw eggs in

rum and rubbed them all over Abelino's body, especially around his knee. The rum-covered eggs might be able to entice the spirit to attach to them instead, he explained. Next, he left the shack and threw the eggs into the distance, luring the spirit away from Abelino's knee.

Over the next few weeks, as Abelino rested, his knee pain subsided somewhat to a level of 5 out of 10 on the pain scale. He was able to walk with a limp, but it still brought excruciating pain if he tried to bend or squat. Since Abelino was not given the option of any lighter duty work, he attempted to return to picking strawberries to help support his family. The swelling immediately increased and the intense pain returned, so Abelino stopped working again after two days.

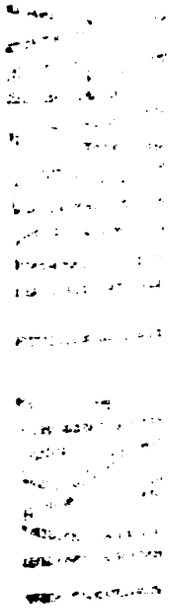
Nineteen days after the injury, LNI opened a claim for Abelino which would pay his medical bills and 2/3 of his salary while he was unable to work. The medical and worker's compensation coverage would end as soon as Abelino was no longer recovering, i.e. his knee had become stable or the problem had become chronic without improvement. The LNI file states that he returned to work "lite duty until reinjured knee [sic]." It is unclear how LNI understood that Abelino's return to strawberry picking to be "lite duty." The urgent care physician recognized this as an incorrect representation and wrote in the medical chart that there was "apparently no light duty work" at the Tanaka Farm, without checking this assumption. The LNI file also states "he indicated he does not speak English. I asked him if he speak Spanish, he said yes, (I think) [sic]." However, LNI did not order or authorize a Spanish interpreter for his medical appointments for another two weeks. Three months after this note, LNI put an alert in Abelino's file that all communication should be sent to Abelino in Spanish instead of English. The vast majority of letters that were sent, however, were still in English only.



The Tanaka Farm indicated to LNI that Abelino made $7.01 an hour and that he did not receive any other benefits. This report undervalued Abelino's pay considerably since he routinely picked well above the mean and was paid piece rate as a picker. The farm sent a copy of Abelino's working hours and pay for the month *beginning* with his knee injury, a month in which Mareclino worked only two days. This incorrect information was used by LNI to calculate how much Abelino worked before his injury and, therefore, his benefits. A free social worker from a local non-profit called LNI to find out what was needed and helped Abelino fax in copies of his checks from the month prior to his injury to rectify the hours, though LNI did not change the calculations from hourly to piece rate. LNI sent Abelino a letter written in English two months after the injury and one month after they calculated his worker's compensation, asking him to review their calculations and let them know if he received housing or any other additional benefits. Unable to read the letter, Abelino did not respond. Once I saw the letter, I called LNI to request that his wage be re-calculated to include his housing. This request was entered into his file and never acted on.

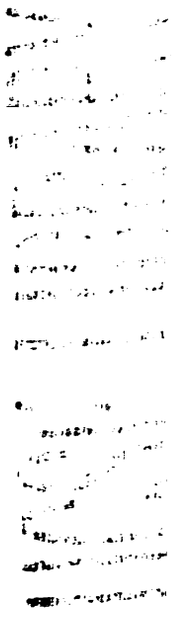
The urgent care doctor requested an orthopedic consult, which reaffirmed a recommendation of light duty work. He also ordered an MRI scan without contrast, which showed normal bone structure with abnormal swelling within the soft tissues in front of and below the patellar tendon and additional swelling internal to the patellar tendon. The MRI report concluded that there was "no instability" in the knee. After a few weeks seeing Abelino without significant improvement, the urgent care doctor ordered the physical therapy discontinued and successfully passed his patient off to a reluctant physiatrist.

The physiatrist did not initially want to take on an LNI patient due to the extra paperwork, but eventually agreed. This physician, who met with Abelino without a



translator, re-started his physical therapy since itseemed to help and told Abelino (though she misunderstood his last name to be his first name and repeatedly addressed him in this way) that he must work hard picking strawberries in order to make his knee better. She apparently did not seem to notice that his attempt to return to work had caused more pain and swelling. She asked me to translate that he had been picking incorrectly and hurt his knee because he didn't know how to bend over correctly, though she had not investigated how he picked and bent nor how one should pick and bend correctly. She wrote in her report that was riddled with type-os that "he is a somewhat poor historian, however, secondary to the language," though it would have been equally appropriate to say she was a poor interviewer due to language barriers. Nonetheless, she did not request translation for Abelino's future appointments. She also handed him a prescription for anti-inflammatory medications that I later noted are contradicted in the case of gastritis. She had not asked Abelino to see if he had any stomach problems.

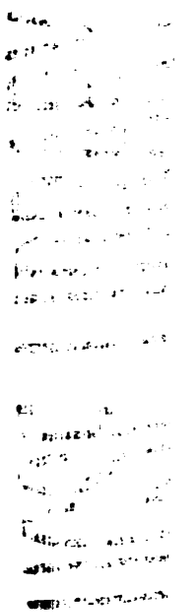
After a few months, LNI arranged a meeting for Abelino with the Tanaka Farm and a consultant to help find out if there was any light duty work available on the farm. Abelino and I went to the farm's front office for the meeting. When Samantha came into the room twenty minutes late, she greeted us warmly. The other farm official was meeting with the LNI consultant in another room and called from there to say that they were still running late. Samantha replied, "no problem, take your time." She then turned to Abelino and said something in Spanish about it being cold outside. Abelino said, "yes, it is really cold in the camps." I explained about the morning frost on the inside of the tin roof that melts every morning effecting a cold indoor rain on one's face and belongings as soon as the sun rose each morning. Samantha said in Spanish, "yeah, yeah, it's so cold—I live on a ranchito—



and I have two geese and four cats and two horses and two dogs. And every morning, the water for the horses is frozen and I have to go out in my slippers with hot water and give water to the horses and the other animals and when I come back in it's so cold it's hard to use my hands." I remember being surprised and frustrated that Samantha seemed unaware of the fact that hundreds of people on the farm lived and slept without insulation or heat in the below-freezing temperatures while she complained about her hands getting cold temporarily in the morning. Abelino responded, "oh, so you have a rancho?" Samantha, "no, no, it's just a couple acres—it's a ranchito." Much like the "contest of suffering" described by James Quesada (1999) and mentioned in the Preface to this dissertation, Samantha erases the ongoing, tremendous suffering of the Triqui migrants by giving precendence to her own suffering in the cold.

The LNI consultant explained to Abelino, with Samantha translating, that she would help him get light duty work on the farm. Abelino explained that he needed to move to California with his family a month later when the picking season in Washington ended. He told her that what he really wanted was for the farm to guarantee him a light duty job for the next season. The consultant explained that if Abelino left the state of Washington, LNI would no longer cover his medical bills related to the work-injury and would no longer help him get light duty work. He re-stated his request for light duty work for the next season and she re-stated that his file would be closed if he left the state. Samantha and the other farm official sat silent. The meeting ended and the consultant was to make recommendations to LNI about what kind of work Abelino could do on the farm.

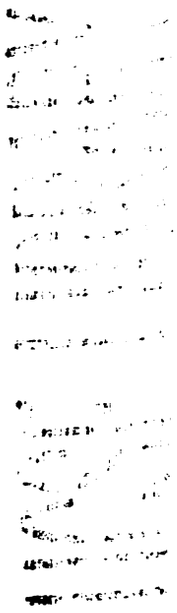
She filed a form recommending that Abelino be given the job of "General Laborer" with "light duty work," "variety of farm activities during the four seasons in which work



varies." The activities listed included "hoeing by hand," "trimming raspberry plants," "hand harvest of berries," "machine harvest of berries," and "other general laborer duties as needed." Apparently, picking berries had become considered light duty. There was no mention in the form of the fact that harvest of berries involves being constantly bent over at the knees and hips. Though Abelino's care had been transferred to the physiatrist, LNI sent the report to the original urgent care doctor whom Abelino had not seen in months, who signed his agreement to this employment plan.

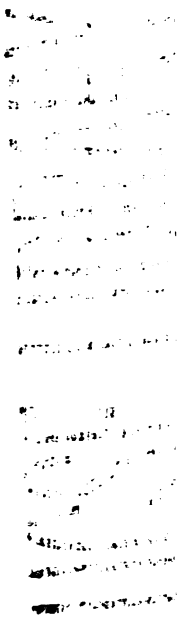
In the next medical appointment, again without a translator, the physiatrist injected Abelino's knee in several places with anti-inflammatory steroids. This significantly reduced the pain and swelling in the knee, though Abelino still had significant pain when squatting or bending with the physical therapist. His average pain now goes from 3 to 5 out of 10 on the pain scale. This improvement prompted the physical therapist to point out the irony that the treatment initially requested by Abelino and refused by the physicians turned out to be most effective. The physical therapist also told me that he was concerned about how the physiatrist seemed to disbelieve Abelino's indication of pain and instead looked only at the X-ray and MRI. The physiatrist seemed to believe only those tests and the findings of her own physical examination of the knee – which officially go in the medical chart under the heading "objective" – and disbelieved Abelino's statements of his own symptoms – which go in the medical chart under "subjective." The physiatrist continued to tell Abelino that he must go back to work in order to get better, despite his indications that bending and squatting still caused intense pain.

The filing of the employment plan by the LNI consultant prompted LNI to prepare to send Abelino back to work. This also involved sending the physiatrist a form for a final



evaluation. This physician responded on the form that Abelino could return to full duty work. Justifying her decision, she quoted directly from the MRI report that there was "no instability" in Abelino's knee. This effectively and immediately closed Abelino's LNI claim, his worker's compensation checks, and the coverage of his medical care. Without fully understanding the LNI process, this doctor explained to me in private that Abelino spoke of an improvement in his knee pain after the injections, not because he really got better, but rather because the picking season was over and he could no longer have worker's compensation.

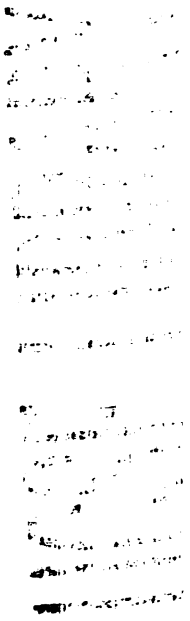
After going to Oregon and California for the winter and spring, Abelino returned to the Tanaka Farm. He attempted to pick berries for two days, but the intense pain and swelling in his right knee returned. Abelino appealed, with the help of a bilingual physician at the migrant clinic, to re-open his claim. The physician at the migrant clinic indicated that Abelino's knee was now more swollen and his range of motion was decreased since the year before when his claim was closed. LNI set up two independent medical evaluations. The physicians summarized the previous MRI findings incorrectly in his report to LNI as "entirely normal." The section of the report titled "Socioeconomic History" indicated only "married with eight dependents, has six years of schooling, no military service, no tobacco, alcohol, or medications, including prescribed medications." They concluded that his knee was "probably not worse" and ordered another MRI, stating that the decision to close the claim should be based on the findings of this MRI. The radiologist's report of the MRI stated that the knee swelling "had not worsened," that Abelino may have degerative arthritis, and that "the claim can be closed." On the basis of this report, LNI denied Abelino's appeal. The letter sent to Abelino, in English only, indicating that his claim would remain closed



ended, "best wishes with your further health, employment and safety." Two years later, Abelino still tells me that he has knee pain and that "the doctors don't know anything (*no saben nada*)."

After considering in some detail the course of Abelino's interactions with medical institutions and LNI, this common statement makes more sense. Several assumptions were made along the way, from a lack of stomach problems to his first return to work being "light duty," from his ability to understand and read English to him being paid as an hourly worker, from his incorrect picking being the cause of his injury to his faking of the pain, from the importance of "objective" tests to the disqualification of his words. Several of these assumptions were made into fact via their inscription in charts and files and later picked up and assumed by other officials. Some might be considered malpractice (such as giving a medicine contraindicated in cases of gastritis without asking first), others seem to be more the outcome of being busy, overworked, and reluctant to doing the work to double-check.

As with the other clinicians in the field of migrant health described earlier, the blaming of the patient's suffering on the behavior of the patient is seen here. Abelino was specifically told, though the physician was not an expert on picking nor had she found out how he actually picked, that he caused his knee injury because he did not know how to bend over correctly. Finally, as would be expected within the paradigm of Foucault's clinical gaze, physicians listened very little to the words of patients and often disqualified those words they heard. Instead, they paid attention somewhat to their own examinations of Abelino's body and increasingly to the findings from radiological studies. Simplistic interpretations of the studies, then, functioned to justify the physiatrist's decision to send Abelino back to picking and the LNI's final closing of his file.

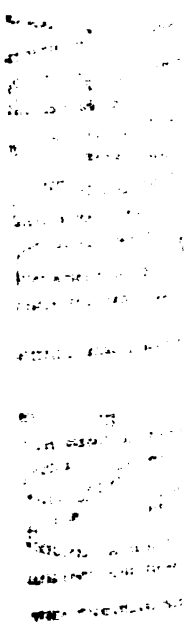


CRESCENCIO'S HEADACHE

Crescencio explained his headache to me at the health fair and I suggested he go to the local migrant clinic to see if there was anything else that could be done for him, as described in the last chapter. I hoped the physicians in the clinic would systematically try different treatments and medications for different kinds of headaches from muskuloseletal to migraine and cluster. The next time I saw Crescencio, he told me that he had seen one of the doctors in the clinic, but that she didn't give him anything for the headache beyond a referral for therapy. He asked me what therapy was and I tried to explain paying someone to sit with you, ask you questions, and listen to your answers in order to help you think and feel more clearly. He barely had money to go to the clinic the first time and I doubted he would spend $15 a session (though that would widely be considered a bargain) for psychotherapy.

After several weeks trying to make an appointment with the doctor who saw him at the migrant clinic, I was finally able to ask her about Crescencio's headache. After thinking for a minute and looking at Crescencio's chart to refresh her memory, she told me that she met with him once briefly over a month ago. She told me about his situation from her perspective,

> "Well, yes, he thinks that he is the victim and thinks that the alcohol or the headache makes him beat his wife...but really he is the perpetrator and everyone else is the victim. And until he owns his problem, he can't really change.
>
> I'm on the CPS [Child Protective Services] subcommittee and so I know a lot about domestic violence, and what we've seen is that nothing really works, none of these migraine medicines or anything, but to put people in jail because then they see a show of force. That's the only thing that works because then they have to own the



problem as theirs and they start to change. It's a classic case of domestic abuse. I bet his dad beat him too. Just classic.

He came to see me once and I told him to come back two weeks later after not drinking. But he didn't come back two weeks later. Instead, he came back a month later and saw not one of our best doctors but an okay doctor, one of our locums. Apparently, he told the doc something about when people at work tell him what to do, it makes him mad and that's what gives him a headache.

Obviously he has issues [looking at me knowingly, with her head cocked to one side]. He needs to learn how to deal with authority. I referred him to therapy. Do you know if he's going to therapy?"

Again, assumptions were made to the patient's detriment. The physician made the assumption that Crescencio describing anger indicated that he beats his wife. Instead of paying attention to the headache and its source, she focused on this assumed domestic violence. This assumption led to her recommendation of incarcerating Crescencio. After hearing from the other physician who saw Crescencio that his headaches are due to treatment from his supervisors on the farm, she assumed that he had "issues" with authority.

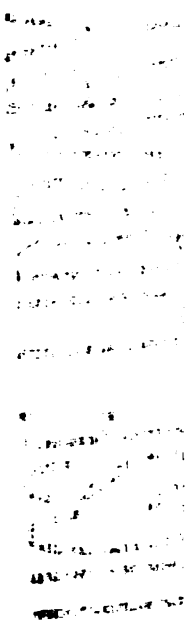
Instead of recognizing that Crescencio's suffering is determined by multiple levels of social inequality and disrespect, she effectively blamed the headache on his psychological makeup. In the end, her primary interventions were twofold. First, she told him to stop drinking cold-turkey, without offering an alternative, even though this was the only effective intervention he had found after years of searching. Of course he was not able to stop drinking. Second, she referred him to therapy, without asking him if it was reasonable for him financially and otherwise. Apparently, in retrospect, she hoped the therapy would not only help Crescencio cope with his headache, but also aid him in accepting his place in the social hierarchy on the farm, including the disrespect and racist insult therein. In this way,

her interventions were not only ineffective, but also served to reinforce the social structures producing Crescencio's suffering in the first place.

BERNARDO'S STOMACHACHE

As described in the last chapter, Bernardo has a chronic stomachache that makes it hard for him to eat such that he feels weak and is losing weight over time. The pain is always present, though it is worse after eating and, thus, makes eating difficult. Every year before he leaves Oaxaca to work in a fish processing plant in Alaska, he goes through several weeks of injections to make him stronger and give him hunger. When he arrives home from Alaska weak and thin, he undergoes this same series of injections again. He attributes the pain to a lifetime, beginning at 9 years of age, of strenuous migrant work as well as to being beaten multiple times by the Mexican military as a suspected member of an indigenous rights movement.

During one season in which he picked berries on the Tanaka Farm, Bernardo went into the local hospital to be seen for his stomach pain. He requested medicines to decrease his pain and increase his appetite. Although Bernardo is an elderly Triqui person and speaks extremely little Spanish, he was seen by an English-speaking physician and his daughter-in-law served as an interpreter. His daughter-in-law is a Mixtec woman who does not speak Triqui and speaks little English. She attempted to translate from Spanish to English. The physician defined Bernardo as a "Hispanic" male in the chart "who speaks only in Spanish, apparently broken Spanish at that, which is difficult for the Spanish interpreter to understands [sic]." Later, the physician indicates his impression, "I must say the history was obtained through an interpreter and my impression is that the patient tended to perseverate on



unrelated things from the questions that were asked, but these were usually not translated to me." With this linguistic barrier, the physician concludes, "he apparently has no past medical history. No medical history." The extent of the social history is summed up in two sentences, "He lives locally. Works as a common laborer." After misunderstanding the translation, the physician also wrote that Bernardo "is an old boxer and wonders if possibly the blunt trauma to his abdomen could contribute to his present condition."

Due to the poor quality medical interview, the physician was unclear about the location and quality of the pain. Bernardo was, thus, admitted overnight to the hospital in order to rule out a heart attack. He was given an exercise test and the technician noted that "he has superb exercise capacity" and that "this is a low risk heart scan." Bernardo repeatedly explained that he needed medicines to decrease his pain and increase his hunger. He also explained that he needed to be at work by 3:30 in the afternoon. After undergoing the exercise test, Bernardo refused to give a sample of blood and to undergo ultrasound evaluation because he did not have time before work. In order to make it to work and avoid being fired from the farm, Bernardo signed an "Against Medical Advice" form and left the hospital. He was later sent a bill for over $3,000.

Not only did Bernardo's hospital experience exemplify many of the problems with medical apathy around the importance of language barriers, but many other forms of apathy as well. The physician assumed Bernardo was a "Hispanic" Spanish speaker without asking to be sure, assumed a very limited social history that ignored his migratory status, and assumed that ruling out a heart attack was the only important plan. He did not take seriously Bernardo's requests for medicine enough to act on them. There was also a significant

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miscommunication that resulted in Bernardo being labeled "an old boxer," though it is unclear to me which of the multiple levels of communication breakdown was at fault.

During my last visit to Oaxaca, I stayed with Bernardo in Juxtlahuaca and visited the physician who gives him the injections that Bernardo indicates are the only remedy that helps his pain and weight loss. I interviewed the physician at night while his clinic was temporarily closed due to an electricity blackout. He told me that Bernardo has a peptic acid problem such as gastritis, colitis, and/or an ulcer. He suggested that this gastrointestinal problem was due to eating "too much hot chili, too much fat, and "many condiments." He continued, "They [indigenous people] also don't eat at the right time, but wait a long time in between meals." The physician gives Bernardo a pill to decrease his peptic acid levels. He stated that there are better pills for this, but they are too expensive for Bernardo to afford. He also recommends that Bernardo eat milk and yogurt. The doctor also gives injections of Vitamin B-12 in order to treat what he considers to be a neuritis or neuropathy. He explained that this neuritis was due to the fact that indigenous people "bend over too much at work and bend too much in their sleep."

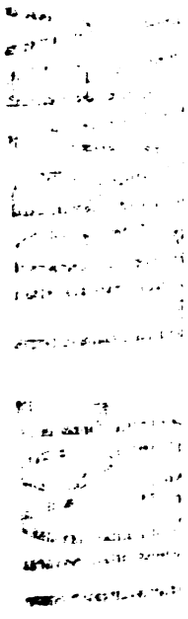
Similarly to many of the clinicians seen above, this physician ignored Bernardo's social and occupational context and, instead, blamed his suffering on his behaviors. Either he had not done an extensive enough intake interview to know about Bernardo being beaten up, or he discounted this history. In addition, his attributions of blame for the peptic acid problem and neuritis on Bernardo's behaviors held explicitly racist assumptions.

ACONTEXTUAL, BLAMING MEDICINE

As described in the last chapter, international political economic asymmetries produce conditions in which specific groups of people are forced to migrate and accept injurious living and working conditions in order to survive. Local living and working inequalities organized around ethnicity and citizenship further determine the hierarchy of suffering on the farm. Due to their location at the bottom of the system, the undocumented Triqui migrant workers endure more than their share of injury and sickness.

As would be expected within the paradigm of Foucault's clinical gaze, the clinicians described above see the individual Triqui bodies in their offices, yet are unable to engage the social context producing their suffering. It is only very infrequently (for example, Dr. Samuelson above) that I have heard a health professional point out the context in which the person lives, the labor camp conditions, the working conditions, the labor hierarchy, international economic policies that concentrate wealth and expand poverty, etc. Yet, these larger political, economic, and social forces are the most proximal causes of the suffering. At the same time, these health care professionals cannot be blamed for their acontextuality. Some of this blindness is caused by the difficult and exhausting circumstances in which these physicians work. It is also caused by the way medicine and science are thought and taught in the industrialized world. Most of these people have chosen their jobs in migrant clinics or clinics for low-income people in order to help. They have a great deal of compassion. Yet, the lenses they are offered through which to see the world have been narrowly-focused, individualistic, and asocial.

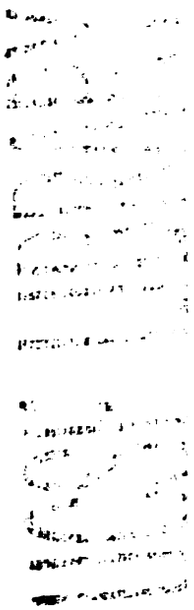
Physicians in the U.S. and Mexico are not trained to see the social determinants of health problems, nor to hear these factors when they are communicated by their patients. This acontextuality is seen when chart reports of social histories entirely exclude social



realities as well as when torture becomes boxing. They are trained, instead, to give most heed to the "objective" information provided by their own physical examinations as well as blood and radiological tests. Thus, it is unavoidable that they would fall into the trap of utilizing a narrow lens that functions to decontextualize sickness, transporting it from the realm of politics and power to the realm of the individual body. Thus, the most proximal determinants of suffering are left unacknowledged, unaddressed, and untreated. In the end, biomedicine functions as an efficient and effective "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1990).

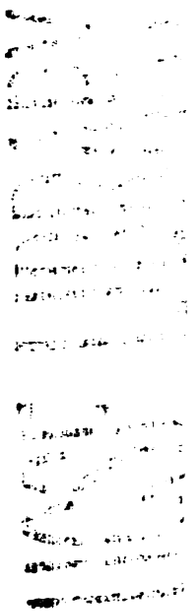
Beyond this acontextual gaze, physicians in North America today are also taught to see behavioral factors in health—such as lifestyle, diet, habits, and addictions. Behavioral health education has been added as part of a laudable move to broaden medical education within the paradigm of biopsychosocial health first described by George Engel in 1977. However, without being trained to consider the global political economic structures and local prejudices that shape the suffering of their patients, health professionals are equipped to see only biological and behavioral determinants of sickness. Thus, well-meaning clinicians inadvertently add insult to injury.

As seen above, without appreciating the continuum of violence located in ethnic and citizenship hierarchies and international policies that place their patients in injurious conditions in the first place, clinicians often blame the sickness on the patient, e.g. the assumed incorrect bend while picking, the supposed trouble with authority, or the presumed inappropriate diet. The way one stands while picking the berries, if indeed incorrect in some unhealthy way, is only a very distal ingredient to one's suffering. Ironically, the progressive move to include behavioral health in medical education without the correlate inclusion of social context may be exactly that which leads clinicians to blame, even criminalize, the



victims of social suffering (see also Terrio 2004). Even those health professionals acutely aware of the social determinants of health may resort to biological and behavioral explanations as a defense mechanism against what they experience as a hopeless. Thus, the victim of prejudices and historical inequalities is blamed for her predicament. She is blamed for the bad jobs and the poor health she has, even though these are effects of the social structures by which she is situated.

The reality of migrant health, however, is even more complicated and dangerous. The limited gaze at work in the migrant clinic makes it impossible for even the most idealistic of clinicians to heal effectively. Not only are these physicians unable to recommend appropriate interventions to the social determinants they cannot see, they often prescribe ineffective treatments with unintended harmful results. Some physicians – for example, the Physiatrist in the Skagit Valley – commit blatantly harmful acts against their patients, such as returning them to full duty work multiple times on a documented, injured knee. Others simply provide poor quality and damaging care out of manifestly racist attitudes. Nonetheless, even the interventions of well meaning physicians – for example, the physician who saw Bernardo in Oaxaca and the physician who saw Crescencio – including appetite enhancing injections and referrals to therapy in order to, among other things, accept cruel treatment from supervisors function to shore up the unequal social formations causing sickness in the first place. These treatments unintentionally depoliticize suffering, thereby buttressing the very structures of oppression. Thus, the violence enacted by social hierarchies extends from the farm to the migrant clinic and back again, despite the impressive values and intentions of those in both institutions.



CHAPTER FOUR

"BECAUSE THEY'RE LOWER TO THE GROUND"
THE NATURALIZATION OF SOCIAL SUFFERING

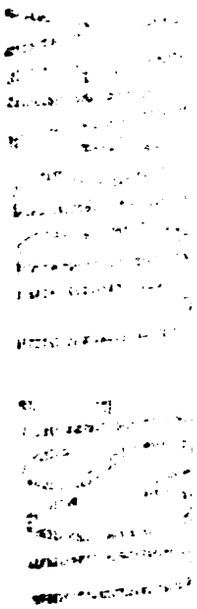
HIDDENNESS OF MIGRANT BODIES

> "There are no migrants here; why are you looking here? I haven't heard of any. If you want migrants, you'll have to go to the other side of the mountains in Eastern Washington. There are lots who pick apples around Yakima, I think. But there aren't any over here."

A regional public health officer in Washington State advised me thus in the fall of 2002 as I explored the possibilities of dissertation fieldwork in Skagit County.

As I have described thus far in the dissertation, the Skagit Valley is an important site in multiple transnational circuits (see Rouse 2002) of thousands of Mexican farm laborers, including indigenous Mixteco and Triqui people from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. How can thousands of people, the very people who make the valley's famous agriculture possible, be overlooked? How can postcards of the annual tulip festival erase the workers who care for and harvest the tulip fields? The public gaze (especially the wealthy public who shop at elite grocery stores and live in exclusive neighborhoods) is trained away and spatially distanced from the migrant farm workers (see Sangaramoorthy 2004, Chavez 1992). A white resident of the Skagit Valley whom I became friends with during my first summer on the Tanaka Farm explained to me,

> "For the world in which I live and the people I live with and surround myself with, the thing that frightens me most is that [Mexican migrant workers] don't exist. They're totally off our radar. They just don't exist. It's more likely we would get involved with a child in Acapulco in an orphanage because it is more glitzy or, I don't



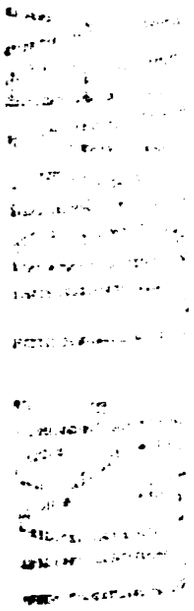
know, less scary than finding out that there are people five miles away that I could be interested in."

In most of the rare instances that this gaze focuses on Mexican migrants in the U.S., anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric along with hate crimes result (Rothenberg 1998, Quesada 1999). Here, as in many places where diasporic laborers struggle to survive (see also Wells 1996), the hiddenness of migrant bodies is just one factor enabling their continued mistreatment and suffering.

In order to work toward the amelioration of social suffering, people must first be aware of the inequalities that cause suffering. This applies not only to the white area residents in the Skagit Valley and Central California, but also to the migrant workers themselves. In addition, these hierarchies must be recognized as socially constructed and, thus, changeable. Conversely, the perception of inequities as normal, deserved, and natural permits the reproduction of such destructive social formations as well as indifference toward them (see, for example, Scheper-Hughes 1997). In order to understand the ongoing oppression of migrant laborers described in this dissertation, the current chapter will explore the ways in which it has become taken for granted, normalized, and naturalized by all involved. In addition, it is my hope that this consideration will generate insights into the possibilities for positive social change to be considered in the Conclusion.

COMPLICATED CATEGORIES

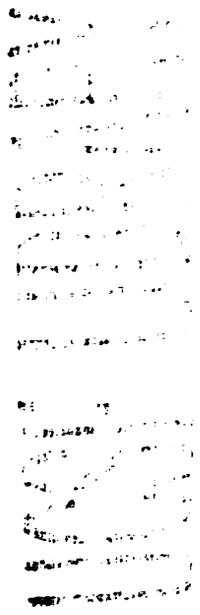
Before starting the ethnographic exploration of the perceptions of migrant laborers by area residents, such categories must be complicated. Depending on their own social location and proximity to the inner workings of U.S. agriculture, local residents perceive migrant laborers differently. Those who are the most distanced from the realities of Mexican migrant



laborers – such as most white area residents in the Skagit Valley and Central California – often consider anyone of Latin American descent, regardless of citizenship, to be "Mexican." Those involved in agriculture, yet relatively removed from Mexican migrant workers – such as the white and Asian-American farm executives and crop managers on the Tanaka Farm – tend to recognize a difference among U.S. Latinos (whom they usually call "hispanics" or "chicanos"), mestizo Mexicans (often referred to as "regular Mexicans"), and indigenous Mexicans from the state of Oaxacan (called simply "Oaxacans"). Those who work directly with Mexican migrant workers – such as the Latino crew bosses on the Tanaka Farm – tend to distinguish among other U.S. Latinos (whom they often call "Tejanos" or "chicanos"), mestizo Mexicans (called simply "Mexicanos"), Mixtecos, and Triquis. A realistic understanding of the many ways in which social inequalities are reproduced and the social suffering of migrant laborers is normalized requires recollection of this multi-layered landscape of social categories.

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

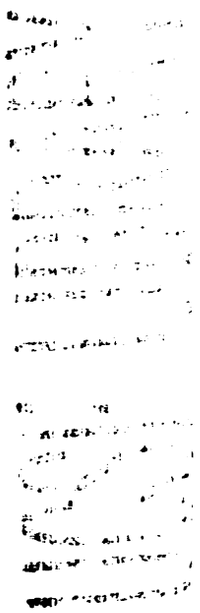
Pierre Bourdieu's conception of symbolic violence proves effective for understanding how the order of inequalities described in this dissertation has become unquestioned and unchallenged, even by those most oppressed. Symbolic violence is the naturalization, including internalization, of social asymmetries. Bourdieu explains that we experience the world through doxa (mental schemata) and habitus (the historically accreted embodiment of these schemata) that are issued forth from that very social world and, therefore, make the social order – including its inequalities – appear natural. Thus, we misrecognize socially constructed oppression as natural. Bourdieu writes, "The effect of symbolic domination



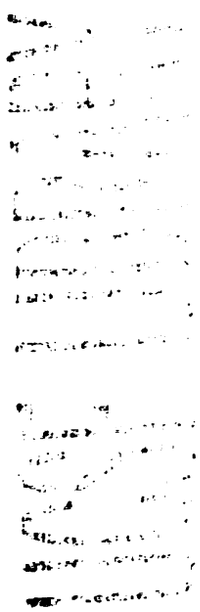
(whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousness but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself" (2001 37). In other words, symbolic violence acts on the level of perception and, thus, is hidden.

Continuing with his metaphor of the social world as a "game," Bourdieu describes *illusio* as "investment in the game." All social actors in a given field must "buy into," via some degree of *illusion*, the rules of the game. In the social world, one of the primary rules is that the actor's "being is a being-perceived, condemned to be defined as it 'really' is by the perception of others" (Bourdieu 1997 166). Taking this into account, the victims of symbolic violence, by definition, unknowingly consent to their own domination by inhabiting the game in the first place. In his book, *Masculine Domination,* we see that both the dominated and the dominant are victims of symbolic violence, although quite differently. Here, both men and women perceive themselves and the other as part of a world "naturally" made up of such schemes as "high/low, male/female, white/black, etc." (Bourdieu 2001 35). This means that each actor must perceive themselves and their world through schemata produced from asymmetric power relations. The assymetries comprising the social world are thus made invisible, taken-for-granted, normal for all involved (1997, 2001, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). These naturalizing and internalizing functions of symbolic violence will aid analysis for the remainder of this chapter.

EXCLUDED AND OUT OF PLACE



Many of the words used to refer to Mexican migrant workers by other area residents function to exclude them from the assumed "us," which is "Americans," based on a symbolic assertion that they are out of their proper place. Commonly used words like "Mexican," "foreigner," and "Oaxacan" imply that the referent is from, pertains to, and *belongs* somewhere else. Interestingly, the usage of these words by most white area residents has very little to do with citizenship, i.e. whether one is legally a Mexican or an American. Thus, one of the white residents of Central California whom I interviewed did not think twice when he referred to the Latino mayor of a nearby town as a "foreigner" even though, in order to qualify to run for election as mayor, he must be a U.S. citizen. Furthermore, the mayor to whom he was referring, unlike himself, was a California native. This usage belies an unspoken fear of the "other" such as in the following statement, "the first thing you run into when you have some foreigner running your community, he doesn't know nothing about politics or nothing. The only thing he wants to do is take over." I came to know this man, J.R., and his wife, Janet, through their nephew, who was one of my close friends growing up. J.R. moved to Central California with his family from the Midwest as a poor "Okie," to pick crops in the 1940s. His family lived in tents and picked grapes and other crops for a dozen years before moving into other forms of work. J.R. is a recently retired mechanic from a large aeronautical company located in California. Janet, also white, grew up in Fresno, California, in a middle class family. She works as a supervisor in one of the divisions of the California State Transit Department. I asked them if I could meet with them over the course of my fieldwork in order to learn about inter-racial relations in the Central Valley. While interviewing them, I primarily asked questions, listened, and showed interest. I avoided

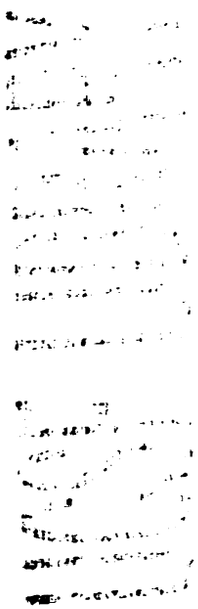


sharing my own opinions or judgments of their statements in order to steer clear of cutting their thoughts and explanations short.

Many white residents of the Skagit Valley and Central California called U.S. citizen Latinos "Mexicans" in a deprecating manner when complaining about them. Janet told me, "one of these days, California will be 75% Mexicans." Similarly, keeping in mind that undocumented immigrants do not qualify for welfare in California, the othering of American Latinos is clear in Janet's statement that, "we let those Mexican people come here. So, when they get to feeling like, 'gee, we don't want to pick cotton, we don't want to pick this,' we let them on our welfare." The use of these words to indicate difference and exlusion from the category, "American," is clear later in the same interview when she complained, "...it drives me nuts when I go to the grocery story and they have those *things* on...it's like, 'well you're just in a grocery store, why don't you start dressing like an American?!'"

An underlying fear capable of provoking violence is made clear when J.R. explained that, "entertainment in my day in [Central California] was busting a Mexican up." I asked, "Just because?" He clarified, "You know, knock him out if you caught him on the street, because sooner or later, he was going to do you that way. ... Just beat the hell out of one of them. Catch him out alone and stomp him, man, real good. Just because he's a Mex." He paused, and then continued, "but you see, he was an endangerment to us. He was taking farm workers' jobs." Janet corrected him that the white people stopped being willing to pick in the fields in California before the farmers had to recruit "Mexicans." J.R. agreed to this and concluded, "plus, he was different then me."

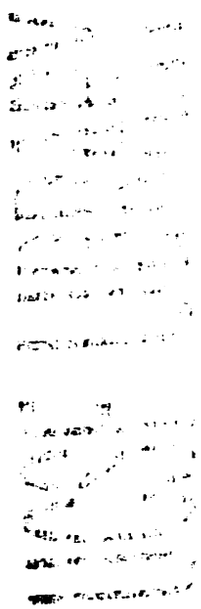
The distaste for difference became clearer in this conversation when J.R. responded to Janet's musings about potential solutions to interracial tensions. He responded,



"Then why are you going to change it? It's because...they're not hungry. So, he's going to stay Mex. That's just the way it is. Too much free welfare. You get your person hungry, and he'll blend; he'll blend then. But until then, why should he change his name, you know like Gonzales instead of Smith? He'll stay Gonzales, and he'll be getting all that free stuff. There's the biggest problem there is, the welfare. ...he's a burden to me because he doesn't want to change."

In another conversation, J.R. told me, "that's why the Mexicans are having problems and now your Hmongs are having problems is they don't want to change. They want to keep their culture. ...you've got to get people blended right away. See, people have to mix. If you don't mix, and you're alienated over there, guess what? You're different." Not only is difference considered a problem, but it is equated with "staying Mex" instead of "blending" into what is considered American.

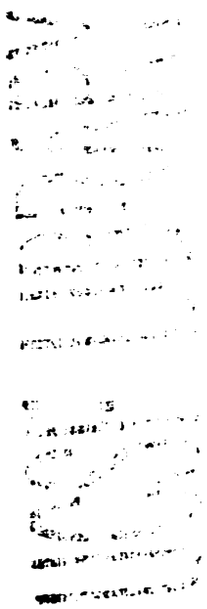
In one of the largest public high schools in the Skagit Valley, dozens of students started a gang during my field work called, "WAM," which stood for "Whites Against Mexicans." This gang painted "WAM" on walls, wrote it on their notebooks and in their cell phones, brought firearms to school, threatened other students, and provoked fights. Another group of students started a weekly event called "WAMsketball" to ease tensions and promote positive inter-ethnic relations. Similar to the usage in Central California, "Mexican" in both these instances did not denote someone of Mexican citizenship, but rather someone different to be looked down on. One of the teachers in the school explained, "there are plenty of kids in the high school who are proud to be Mexican and flaunt that. Some kids in the high school think they bring it on themselves because they don't just make the choice to be like the white kids." She gave examples of the way they dressed and did their hair to describe how "Mexican" these students were. She went on to describe that it was not just



ethnically white students who were part of WAM, but also Samoan, Asian-American, and Latino students.

One of the Latino students, Junior, who plays WAMsketball on the white team or serves as referee, described, "it is an attitude thing. It is like the Mexicans have the attitude in high school." His white friend, John, who had been part of WAM in the beginning and then later joined WAMsketball, attempted to explain Junior's ethnicity, "I know Junior, he is Mexican, but not really. [Speaking to Junior] You can't be Mexican...because if you are Mexican, white people can't talk to you at our school." Despite the ironic context of WAM, Junior responded, "Mexicans are the ones who are like gangsters, that is what a Mexican is." Junior continued, "When you say someone is Hispanic, it is like saying you have respect for that person. But if you call them Mexican, it is like saying you are a dirty Mexican."

In *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas explains that dirt is simply matter out of place. She writes, "dirt is essentially disorder... it exists in the eye of the beholder... In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea" (*Ibid.* 2). Much like sand is considered "clean" when it is on a beach or in a sandbox, but "dirty" when it is inside a house or on a child's hands, those considered Mexican and, therefore, out of their proper place are often also referred to as dirty. Furthermore, area residents and local newspapers used metaphors of "cleaning up the neighborhood" to indicate a project that functionally got rid of those considered Mexican from their area by shutting down a labor camp, a day laborer pick-up spot, or an apartment building occupied primarily by Mexican migrants or U.S. Latinos.



Although in one breath J.R. complains that "[Mexicans] dress better than I do," he later called them "dirty" and "filthy." For example, he described to me a local farm labor camp and said,

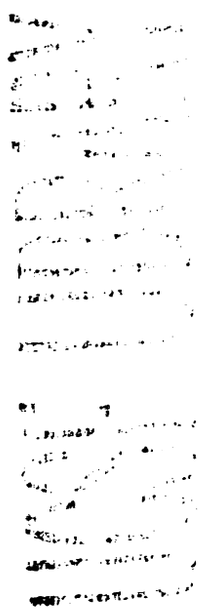
> "So, what [the Mexicans] had done was they'd blamed the farmer for their filthiness, blamed him! Says he's running a slave labor camp out there with sub-standard housing flats. No plumbing, you know, none of this, you know. ...the toilet was broke off its plumbing, it hadn't been cleaned or swept since they moved in, beer cans everywhere. There he was drinking beer when he should've been cleaning his house. Filthy-ass Mexicans for you now."

He continued, contrasting his childhood as an immigrant "Okie" in California with the Mexicans,

> "...when we lived in the tents, that floor was just as this one and the kids were clean. My mother always said, 'soap is cheap,' and there wasn't no cockroaches in our house. No, because we kept things clean. But these wetbacks, what I still call them, now they're 'migrants,' they come into a beautiful settlement and they tear it up drunk, drinking, and then they want another one. Now, there's a town out here called Dos Palos. They had a beautiful set-up there, you know, work camps, and it was an old airport left over from World War II. They took a bulldozer to that sucker because the Mexicans were complaining how filthy it was. It was; it was filthy. But it was them. All you could see in there was fast-food wrappers, fast-food cups. They'd stop off here at the old Taco Bell and whatever and buy their food and go on eating and then drink *cervezas*, *mucho cervezas*, oh, just keep it coming."

Another area resident I met during my preliminary trips to Central California, herself half Latina and half Native American, complained to me, "those Mexicans are dirty. They are dirty and selfish. They're taking over like cockroaches!"

While they themselves are symbolically excluded from the category, "American," U.S. Latinos and mestizo Mexicans enacted another exclusion, that of indigenous Mexican

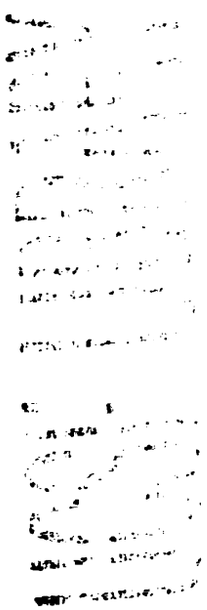


people. When used by these speakers, the words, "Mexican" or "Mexicano," serve to denote mestizo Mexicans only. Despite their Mexican citizenship, Mixteco and Triqui Mexicans from the state of Oaxaca are excluded from this category and called simply, "Oaxacan," "Oaxaqueño," or more deprecatingly "Oaxaco" or "Indio." At times, U.S. Latinos referred to mestizo Mexicans as "regular Mexicans," in order to differentiate them from "Oaxacans." Interestingly, three U.S. Latino crew bosses on the Tanaka Farm described Mixteco and Triqui people, but not mestizo Mexicans, as "dirty." One bilingual white receptionist on the farm described Oaxacan people as "dirtier" than "regular Mexicans." These symbolic exclusion are some of the many factors enabling white U.S. citizens and, in turn, Latino U.S. citizens, to become indifferent to the suffering of those considered different or other.

BLAMED FOR SUFFERING

At every level of the ethnic-citizenship hierarchy described in Chapter 1, each group of people considers those below them to deserve their suffering through some fault of their own. White residents of Central California regularly told me that "Mexicans" are not educated because they are "lazy." Several white people in California and the Skagit Valley explained to me that "Mexicans" have bad jobs because they "don't try to learn English." Samantha, the Tanaka Farm bilingual receptionist claimed that "they don't have bank accounts because they don't know how; they are like kids." Janet, from Central California, told me, "I get kind of pissed off about the Mexicans because they seem like they don't try to learn English, you know, and they are in our country, why don't they learn it?" During a different conversation, Janet explained,

> "Usually in the morning I get up and I get ready for work. I turn on the T.V. to see the news and you can learn how to speak English and it's 'number one' and



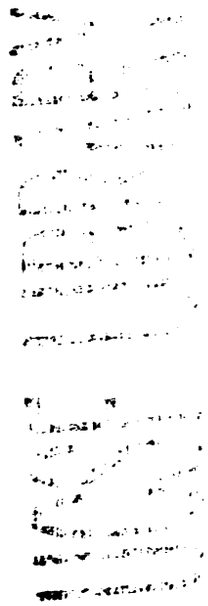
they hold up a number one and every day it's something different that's like 'thank you,' 'thank you,' and they'll repeat it. They'll repeat it and then they'll hold the word up and show it to you. There's things on T.V. and if people really wanted to – I know they're out in the field, but still – I think that if they wanted to, they could learn something, as far as to make it."

Repeating the commonly held myth of a classless, individualistic America, J.R. concluded one interview, "you can do anything you want in this country. Anyone can be anything they want to. There is no excuse in this country. There are no barriers. Nothing holds you back except for you. You have no one to blame if you don't become the best you could except for you." In a similarly acontextual manner, many white U.S. citizens charge the country of Mexico or "Mexican political corruption" with all of the blame for the imperative for the rural Mexican poor to migrate in order to survive.

Within Mexico, mestizo Mexicans blamed Triqui people for their own suffering. One of the mestiza nuns, Luz Maria, in San Miguel explained that Triqui people are poor because,

> "They are not capable of making sources of work. Many do not know how to live. In everything, in hyiene and cleaning the house and preparing food, keeping animals and doing economics. Someone could make a *tortilleria* that would be open a few hours a day and people could sell their corn to them or there could be a pharmacy so people don't have to go to Tlaxiaco or a big grocery store – though that would be difficult because you would have to pay someone to stay watch in order to keep your earnings from being stolen away. They don't work very hard and they don't know how to work very hard."

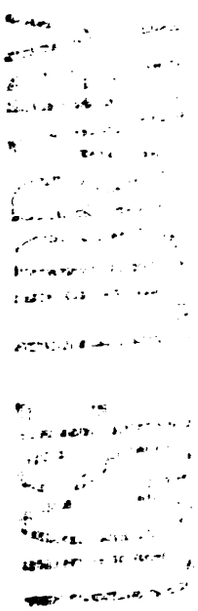
When I asked her how Triqui people are different from mestizo Mexicans, she explained simply that "they are violent." At one point, this nun admitted that Triqui people carry guns "because of generations of being kicked out of places and defending themselves." Like many indigenous towns of Oaxaca. San Miguel had been in several consecutive battles



with many fatalities over land ownership with nearby, encroaching mestizo and Mixteco towns. Luz Maria told me, "the land conflicts are over just a meter or two. Probably [*a lo major*], these Triquis wanted the line another meter over there and the Mixtecos from Santa Maria wanted another meter this way." In this way, she minimized the causes of violence, implicitly backing up her claim that Triqui people are inherently violent. One of the mestiza nurses in San Miguel, Juana, described in the last chapter, similarly warned me about the violence of the Triqui people and told me that I should think twice before helping any of them in any way.

"Want" is a common metaphor through which migrant workers are blamed for their suffering. For example, John Tanaka, President of the Tanaka Farm, told me that the pickers "are not going to take a lunch break. They're just not going to do it. They don't want a lunch break." The next summer, Scott, the apple crop manager, told me almost exactly the same thing, claiming that pickers wanted to work all day without a lunch break. In response to picker complaints about the confusing pay scale during the first strike meeting, John Tanaka whispered to me, "they don't want to understand."

Mexican migrant workers are also regularly blamed for the suffering of those considered to be American. As seen in the above quotes, J.R. considers them to be "a burden on [him] because [they] won't change" and because he believes they collect welfare. When I asked a neighbor of the migrant camp in which I lived in the Skagit Valley, named Phil, what he thought his migrant laborer neighbors, he replied, "I lost my job because of them!" He explained that he had worked for a local white farmer for over 10 years, but was replaced because that farmer could hire two migrant workers for what he was being paid. His mother then reminded him that he hated that job, and Phil agreed. Phil had been a driver of large



semi trucks, delivering potatoes from a local farm throughout several western states. Now, he works at the local fire station, being trained as a fire fighter. Interestingly, he blamed the Mexican migrants, excused the farmer who actually made the hiring decisions, and kept silent about the pressures from the international market. Regarding the farmer, Phil stated simply, "I understand where he is coming from, he wants to run his farm efficiently." In a similar vein, California's "Save Our State" initiative states that Californians "have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state. ...they have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state..." (California's Proposition 187, quoted in Quesada 1999 175). Quesada argues that this blaming of the suffering of (white) Californians on undocumented Mexican migrants disqualifies the suffering of migrants, themselves.

NORMALIZATION

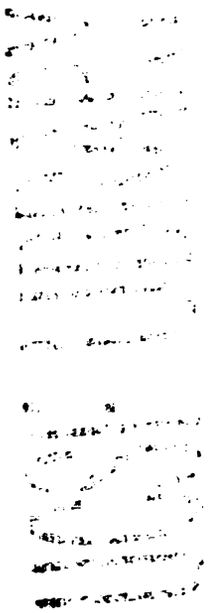
For many white residents of the Skagit Valley and Central California, the suffering of migrant laborers is understood to be normal for many different reasons. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, people simply get used to seeing the conditions in which migrant workers live and work. Although the migrant camps are hidden from view for the vast majority of Skagit Valley residents, those who own houses near the camps walk, bike, and drive past the camps every day. Several of these people told me that they were troubled by the living conditions of the camps when they first moved to the area, but have gotten used to the camps and now pass them without a second thought.

Second, many people justify the living conditions of migrant workers based on what they assume to be normal for these workers. John Tanaka echoed what many people told me,

that the camps were acceptable because they were much better than the housing the pickers had in Mexico. None of the people making this claim, however, had visited any of the pickers in the homes in Mexico. Regardless, this justification assumes as acceptable that the original economic inequalities that leave Triqui people in meager housing in Oaxaca. Ironically, many other people justified the living conditions of migrant farm workers utilizing an opposite assumption, that the housing the pickers had in Mexico or California was much better than the camps. The owner of the closest grocery store to the camps, where many pickers walked to buy food, told me that the camps were fine because "they all have pools and big houses in Mexico and California and are just here for the summer." A neighbor of the labor camp where I lived in the Skagit told me, "well, they all have cars, so they don't need anything."

A few people mentioned an assumption of economic mobility and ethnic succession. As mentioned in Chapter One, John Tanaka mentioned several times that, "once any particular group of people go through a three generation move, they'll no longer be in agriculture." He based this on his experience that Japanese Americans had, "worked [their] way up" the economic ladder in the United States since they arrived. The statement also belies a recognition that picking fruit on a farm is an undesirable occupation. Several other people told me that they hoped the pickers would "work their way up" in society.

Finally, the segregation of the farm aids normalization in multiple ways. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Shelly, the supervisor of the checkers, reprimanded white teen checkers if she heard of them interacting with the Mexican pickers. She explained to me that their getting to know each other would bring bias into the weighing of berries. This active segregation certainly led to, among other things, an everyday violence that dehumanized the



Mexican pickers. White, teen checkers regularly carried on conversations without any sign of acknowledgement as a Mexican picker brought their berries to be weighed. They continued their stories and jokes as they weighed the berries and marked the picker's card as though the picker were not present. While Shelly believes that having teen checkers from the area work on the farm brings "community value," it also certainly teaches them to dehumanize Mexican people and see ethnic labor hierarchies as normal.

NATURALIZATION AND INTERNALIZATION

When I asked a mestiza Mexican social worker why Triqui people have only berry picking jobs, she explained that, "Oaxacans like to work bent over (*A los Oaxaquenos les gusta trabajar agachado),*" whereas, she told me, mestizo Mexicans, whom she called simply "*Mexicanos*," get too many pains if they work in the fields. In response to the same question, the Mixteco crew boss, Mateo, told me that the Triqui people are, "brutes for work (*bruto para trabajar*)." He explained that, when he first came to the Tanaka Farm 10 years ago, all of the pickers were mestizo from northern Mexico. As Mixteco people began to migrate to the farm, they picked faster and the mestizo Mexicans, over time, stopped coming. Now, Mateo told me, the Triqui people are the fast, "brutish" pickers and less and less Mixtecos are coming to the farm to pick.

Later, I asked the farm's apple crop manager, Scott, why I had not seen any Triqui people harvesting apples, the field job with the highest pay. He explained,

> "The O'xacans are too short to reach the apples, they're too slow. ... Well, they have to use ladders a lot more than some of the other guys. The other guys just use the ladders to pick the very top of the tree, where the O'xacans are having to, you know, halfway. ... And, besides, they don't like ladders, anyway."

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Scott continued that Oaxacans are perfect for picking berries "because they're lower to the ground." Several other people, when I asked them how Triqui people are different than mestizo Mexicans, stated simply that, "they're short." The sentiment that Mexicans should work picking berries was echoed, reminiscent also of justifications of slavery in the Civil War South, by U.S. Senator Murphy from California during a Senate debate on immigration the 1960s in which he stated that Mexicans should be farm workers because they are "built lower to the ground so it's easier for them to stoop" (Thompson 1999).

The social worker and apple manager's quotes are representative of many statements regarding the places of Triqui people on the farm. These perceptions of bodily difference along ethnic lines serve as the lenses through which symbolic violence is enacted such that each category of body is understood to *deserve* its relative social position. Because of what are considered their "natural characteristics," indigenous Oaxacan bodies are understood to *belong* picking berries as opposed to other jobs. On the other hand, other ethnicities have bodies that do not fit well in the picker category and belong in other positions.

When I asked Scott about the potential negative health effects of pesticides, he replied,

> "The laws are so tight that...there's no way anybody should be able to get sick from pesticides. I mean, it's that strict.... There are a few people out there that are a lot more sensitive, and they show it once in a while. It's not that we did anything wrong, or a neighbor did anything wrong, it's – they're just a lot more sensitive to it and you're always going to find those people. I've been working with pesticides for 20 – 25 years. As I said, the laws are a lot stricter and the pesticides are softer. Go out and spray and eat it the same day! It's just – the chemistry has changed and really advanced. Yeah, some of it you can see, pesticide residue. Some of it that people claim is residue, it's actually dirt, dust...."

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Here, it is not ethnic body differences, but rather, individual body differences that deflect any blame away from the farm and other institutions for pesticide exposure and its related health effects. At the same time that symbolic violence is enacted from without in the above ways, the concept inheres a sense of internalization and complicity of the dominated. One does not perceive only others, but also oneself, as belonging in ordained social locations.

During my second day picking strawberries, a tractor with long metal extensions spraying something in the air drove through the field while we picked. I asked a supervisor what it was, "Do you really want to know? You sure you want the truth?" I answered, "Yes." "Dangerous insecticides," he said, shaking his head at me. I later noticed danger signs posted on several large canisters surrounding one of the hand washing and outhouse stations at the entrance to the field. Strawberry pickers worked everyday without gloves as the visible pesticide residues dissolved in the mixture of strawberry juice that stained their hands dark maroon. If they ate anything, they ate it in the fields while picking, without washing their hands in order to pick faster. Our only education about pesticides came from a short warning cassette tape in monotone Spanish played inaudibly in one corner of a huge warehouse full of over one hundred workers and their children during one of the picker orientations. After the tape, the farm administrator in charge of all the workers asked if we had any questions. After a brief silence, he was satisfied and moved on to explain where we should sign the forms we were given. One of the forms constituted a "yellow dog" agreement, signing away our freedom to organize.

The same week as the spraying described above, I received a video I had ordered from the United Farm Workers about the health-related dangers of pesticides. Several Triqui pickers watched it with me. Afterward, I asked them what they thought. One told me

matter-of-factly, "Pesticides affect only white Americans (*gabachos*) because your bodies are delicate and weak." Another said, "We Triquis are strong and *aguantamos* (hold out, bear, longsuffer)." The others nodded. These ideas were reflected to me several times over the course of my fieldwork. One of the Triqui people with whom I traveled to Oaxaca bragged to me that there were many Triqui people in the military in Mexico because "we longsuffer (*aguantamos*)." Here, Triqui people internalize their class position through a pride in perceived bodily differences that ironically aids in the naturalization and, therefore, reproduction of the very structures of their oppression.

BODY POSITION IN LABOR

In addition, perceptions of body position relate to a hierarchy of human-ness. The interpretations of class and body position offered by Erwin Strauss (though somewhat universalist, 1966) and, later, Scheper-Hughes (1992) prove helpful. The dual meaning of the word, "position," as both a post of employment and a stance of the body hints at one phenomenon. Occupations performed seated behind a desk are symbolically linked to the mind, such that they are more prestigious in a society that subjugates body to mind. Jobs executed standing or walking are seen as more bodily, less intellectual and therefore less esteemed. At the same time, these standing bodies are understood to be humans of solid standing. This basic respect is seen in the phrases "upstanding citizen", "upright character," and "standing up for oneself." Finally, the jobs at the bottom of the hierarchy that require bodies to kneel in the dirt or bend over in the bushes are the least respected (Brandes 1980). Like animals, these workers are seen "on all fours."

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This general analysis applies well to the Skagit where those with the most power and prestige hold desk jobs, mid-level supervisors stand and walk, and the lowest level workers – bent over all day – are derided as *dogs* and *burros*. Mateo was mentioned in Chapter 1 as the only indigenous Oaxacan on the farm promoted to a supervisor post. As described earlier, he hopes to continue studying English and being promoted on the farm until he can "work with his mind instead of his body." He explained the superiority of desk jobs over manual labor in the following way, "The body will not always give (*no siempre va a dar*), and I think it will tire (*cansar*). Your mind might tire after years, but not like the body, not enough to give you a sickness (*no tanto para darte una enfermedad*)." During the berry picker strike mentioned in Chapter 1, the pickers complained that they felt treated like they were "lower" than other workers because they picked. Yet, Scott dismissed this experience, stating, "I almost got the feeling that they thought that maybe they were lowered just because they were a picker, which, to me, that's one of the most important jobs on the farm."

Over the course of my fieldwork on the farm, berry pickers were treated as sub-humans on several occasions. During one Northwest rainstorm, several Triqui women waited outside the farm office to ask a question about their paychecks. They huddled together under the overhang of the roof in the mud. When Shelly arrived, she said in English, "What are you doing standing in my flowers? Shoo! Shoo! Get, get! [waving her hands as if to scare away an unwanted pack of dogs]."

In essence, the migrant body is made to betray itself. Specifically, because of perceptions of ethnic difference and body position in labor, the migrant body is seen as belonging in its position in the very agricultural labor hierarchy that then leads to its deterioration. These mechanisms of rendering inequality invisible are potentiated by

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internalization into Triqui forms of pride. The structural violence inherent to segregated labor on the farm is so effectively erased precisely because its disappearance takes place at the level of the body, and is thus understood to be natural.

RESISTANCES AND REFUSALS

Though extremely powerful, the naturalization and normalization of these social hierarchies and health disparities are still incomplete. Very rarely, one can glimpse places in which people do not entirely accept their own social location and, instead, offer insightful critiques. The bank through which the Tanaka Farm pays the pickers has a policy that berry pickers must wait in a separate line at the bank on pay days and let all other customers go first. Thus, every Friday, there is a long line of Mexican migrant workers spreading out into the parking lot, waiting up to several hours, watching as each white customer who comes to the door is immediately escorted to the front of the line. Interestingly, though I was paid as berry picker by the farm, the bank personnel always tried to escort me to the front of the line when I arrived with my Triqui companions on pay day. While this practice explicitly teaches white and Triqui people the social hierarchy present in the valley, there were a few area residents who told me that this was not fair and at least one who asked the bank to change their practices. In a minor way, I saw this resistance to normalization also when neighbors of the farm camp admitted that sometimes they feel "guilty" or "bad" when they drive by the camp on their way home. Even more rarely, people in the U.S. and Mexico employed some degree of broader social analysis. The owner of a small bed and breakfast near one of the migrant camps in the Skagit Valley explained many of the international forces constraining farmers in the area. He clarified that if the State of Washington were to raise the minimum

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wage, many of the farms might mechanize, costing thousands of picking jobs and making the situation worse for migrant laboers. He rightfully concluded, "it's very complex."

In San Miguel, Oaxaca, Pepsi is delivered weekly by a large, semi truck, whereas Mexican sodas, Rey, are sold in small, Triqui-owned tiendas. People are beginning to buy huge flats of Pepsi bottles for fiestas and other parties, instead of buying Rey from tiendas in town. However, there is a common rumor in town among all age groups, that Coca Cola and Pepsi are made with human blood. I asked one of the daughters in the family with whom I lived in San Miguel to explain how the blood was put in the soda. She explained that people are ground up, alive and screaming, into a bloody pulp in the factories of these companies and put into their drinks. Although she would drink Pepsi sometimes when it was the only thing offered to her, she preferred to avoid drinking blood and would, thus, pick Rey if given a choice.

Using a "hermeneutic of generosity" (Farmer 1993), there are many ways in which multinational corporations thrive while grinding up living human beings, especially those who are poor and marginalized. They produce unhealthy products in environmentally unsustainable ways in factories often with poor working conditions, globally market them primarily to the poor and uneducated, and form large conglomerations of soda brands that are all sold cheaply, functionally driving smaller producers out of business. This rumor, then, critiques and leads to practical resistance to unequal and harmful economic structures. Nonetheless, Pepsi and Coca Cola continue to grow, most smaller companies close, and there is a developing trend to drink Pepsi in San Miguel.

CONCLUSION

Though there are small signs of awareness of unequal social structures and their detrimental effects, the ethnic-citizenship hierarchy in U.S. agriculture and its correlated hierarchy of suffering are largely unquestioned and unchallenged by all those involved. The normalization and naturalization of these inequalities, which foster their reproduction, take place on many levels through various symbolic and physical means. The working and living conditions of migrant farm workers are hidden from public view and justified through assumptions about what kinds of housing and jobs different people deserve. Metaphors of dirtiness and words of reference exclude them from the category "American," and belie a supposition that they are out of place in the U.S. Mexican migrant laborers are blamed for their own suffering, often with the metaphor of "want," as well as for the suffering of those categorized as "American." Finally, and perhaps most effectively, Triqui people are understood to deserve their location in the social hierarchy due to their natural, ethnic, body characteristics. This naturalization of oppression and racism is particularly efficient and unquestioned because it is invisibly effected at the level of the body. In order for there to be an effective, broad coalition of people working to change the unhealthy inequalities laid out in this dissertation, they must see such hierarchies as harmful, socially constructed, and malleable. The Conclusion will further explore symbolic, economic, political and inter-personal means for working toward equality and dismantling the structures producing social suffering.

CONCLUSION

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAGMATIC SOLIDARITY

DENATURALIZING SOCIAL SUFFERING

An embodied anthropology of that which is hidden in U.S. agriculture reveals a segregation of laboring bodies by perceived ethnicity and citizenship into a hierarchy that, in turn, produces correlated suffering. Such inequalities are effectively naturalized through the symbolic violence enacted by discrepant hiddenness of bodies, perceived bodily differences, ethnic conceptions of pride, and imputed humanity based on body position. In addition, clinicians in the field of migrant health tend not to see these inequalities nor their determination of sickness through their medical gaze. Instead, they often blame patients for their suffering and recommend interventions inadvertently complicit with the social structure. The structural nature of these inequalities is illuminated by the fact that even idealistic and ethical farmers and clinicians operate within a gray zone that neutralizes and sometimes even reverses their efforts at ethical action.

If medical social scientists are to work toward ameliorating socially-structured suffering, we must join with others in a broad effort to denaturalize social inequalities, uncovering linkages between symbolic violence and suffering (Bourgois 2001). In this way, these schemata of perception as well as the social inequalities they reinforce can be transformed. This dissertation endeavors to denaturalize ethnic and citizenship inequalities in labor on the farm, health disparities in the clinic, and racialized inequities in society at large. It will be important for further research to consider the production and representation of violence among Triqui people, as well as the ways in which such representations are used for the maintenance of their oppression. Exploration of the ways in which symbolic violence

regarding Mexican migrant laborers constructs the fatal conditions of the U.S.-Mexico border will be critical to challenging the further militarization of the borderlands. In order to imagine more effective and contextual medical training, we will need further understanding of which factors produce greater and lesser awareness of social context among physicians. Yet, an academic critique of the social order can take us only so far and may lose touch with the lived reality it purports to analyze.

PRAGMATIC SOLIDARITY ON THE FARM

"Pragmatic solidarity" is a phrase used by Paul Farmer (1999) to encourage those of us who are relatively privileged and powerful to join alongside the struggles of oppressed people instead of working solely as disconnected "experts." The academic project of denaturalizing social inequities must be accompanied by efforts at all levels of a micro to macro continuum. On the farm, this would mean such things as including pickers in English classes, improving pesticide safety education and decreasing pesticide usage, and developing more fair means for employee hiring and advancement. Over the last several years, the farm has begun transitioning several fields of blueberries to be certified organic. While this would hold great potential health benefit for blueberry pickers, the farm has changed each of these fields, once certified as organic, to machine pick. Every time farm executives and managers asked my advice on what should be done to improve the living and working conditions of the pickers, I offered to translate for them so that they could ask farm workers themselves. Only one such manager took me up on the offer. More often than anything else, my Triqui companions asked for gravel to be put in the roadways and English classes to be offered for the pickers. The gravel would keep the dirt roadways from alternating between sticky mud

with deep ruts and fine dust that ends up covering everything in the camps, even inside the shacks. Many pickers requested English classes to be offered on an evening after work besides payday and preferably located in the camps themselves.

As mentioned earlier, the farm executives responded to these requests by mowing the grass over the septic tank draining field, which they called "the soccer field." This was done despite the fact that the Oaxacan people on the farm play basketball regularly and never once played soccer. During my second summer on the farm, an ad-hoc group of area residents collected a few hundred dollars for the graveling of the camp driveways and local college students offered to help put it in place. To my knowledge, this has been done only in the camp closest to the main road, where the shacks already have insulation, heat, and double roofs. A group of volunteers from one national and one local non-profit offered to give free English as a Second Language classes in the camps once a week after the pickers returned from work. These classes were offered one summer and not repeated the following summer with new volunteers.

CONTEXTUAL MEDICINE / LIBERATION MEDICINE

In Chapter 3, we explored the suffering of Triqui migrant laborers as well as the health disparities related to institutional racism and global economic inequalities. The only thing as appalling as the prevalence of socially determined suffering among Mexican migrant laborers is the response of the health care community. In Chapter 4, we saw the medicalization of conjugated oppression, socially-structured work injury, and political torture. By "medicalization," I mean the defining of an entity as primarily or solely medical (Illich 1976, Kaw 1993, Martin 1992, Scheper-Hughes 1990), while stripping it of its

political, social, historical, and economic context. By reducing suffering to its biomedical and behavioral components, health workers deny the forces that cause it and, therefore, lose the opportunity to effectively address it. They do not work to prevent sickness alongside the suffering for political, social, and economic change. In some ways, they even keep their patients from doing this. These health professionals use a narrow, reductionistic definition of their own roles as health care providers. In fact, Scheper-Hughes states, "Medicine is, among other things, a technical practice for 'rationalizing' human misery and for containing it to safe quarters, keeping it 'in its place,' and so cutting off its potential for generating an active critique" (1992).

In another essay, however, Scheper-Hughes discusses the "rebel body," so termed because the body can offer critiques of social dis-ease and, thereby, resist power when no other recourse is available to the person (1994). More explicitly, she writes that illness "can contain the elements necessary for critique and liberation" (1992). How would the practice of medicine look if clinicians paid attention to the social critiques presented by the suffering bodies in our offices? How do we currently avoid treating and preventing health dilemmas appropriately by defining them out of context and treating them with mere band-aids, or worse? How would the role of health professionals be defined if we took seriously our call to relieve and prevent suffering while also remembering the structural forces so centrally determining suffering?

If the health sector responded to sickness by treating not only its current manifestations, but also its social, economic, and political causes, health care could become a form of "liberation medicine" (see Scheper-Hughes 1992, Smith and Hilsbos 1999). This term comes from an association with liberation theology, in which a reflective engagement

with the poor and suffering leads to new ways of thinking and practicing theology with a commitment to social justice. While it is true, as readers of earlier versions of this dissertation have pointed out, there is a genuine need for the skills of a narrowly-trained physician, along the lines of an auto mechanic, I am convinced this is not enough.

As I hope Chapter 4 made clear, medical skills practiced without at least a recognition of the social structures causing sickness are doomed to address only the distal, biomedical and behavioral inputs into disease. This leads to ineffective health care, at best, and complicit, injurious health care at worst. Far from being unrealistically demanding to encourage physicians to recognize and engage the causes of their patients' suffering, this commitment falls clearly within the biopsychosocial model of health (Engel 1977) purportedly subscribed to by medical schools nationwide.

In the current version of this model in medical education, the biological receives the bulk of time, the psychological or behavioral takes up a small minority of time, and the social is mentioned in passing, if at all. Adding social context to medical education would be moving toward a more realistic and balanced version of the biopsychosocial model already assumed in contemporary medicine. More importantly, this would give future physicians the lenses to recognize the societal critiques available in sicknesses and their distributions. With an awareness of the social context of disease, medical professionals can move effectively toward treating and preventing such suffering.

Beyond treating our individual patients more effectively, we can also begin to practice liberation medicine, working alongside our patients for positive social change. Rudolf Virchow, 19th Century German physician pathologist, is considered to be the founder of the field of Social Medicine. He believed that the calling of physicians to work with the

suffering meant that they should become involved in seeking more healthy forms of society. Thus, he stated, "politics is nothing more than medicine on a grand scale (1985)." Acknowledging the social context of suffering, we can begin to envision (with those who are sick) specific solutions and to work alongside patients toward positive social change. In this way, we will respond appropriately to the sickness and suffering of the people we attempt to serve.

PRAGMATIC SOLIDARITY FROM SOCIETY TO GLOBE

In U.S. society at large, possibilities for pragmatic solidarity include such things as promoting and buying the products of farms that treat workers fairly, lobbying the government to change border policies and practices, developing experiential education programs working toward inter-ethnic understanding and against the othering of those considered different. The Domestic Fair Trade Working Group is attempting to launch a fair trade label in the United States, much like that available in Europe. The United Farm Workers and the Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos organize workers for better working conditions and treatment. In Arizona, organizations like No More Deaths, the Samaritans, Healing Our Borders, Borderlinks, Border Action Network, and Humane Borders seek to ameliorate migrant fatality on the border by offering medical care to migrants in distress, placing water barrels especially dangerous areas, and offering seminars on related issues. Other organizations, such as The Food Justice Alliance and Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, work to develop community conversations about and awareness of the importance of the future of agriculture in the United States. In the Skagit Valley, The People's Seminary

offers seminars in which area residents hear from farm owners, pickers, border patrol agents and others in order to form more realistic perceptions of U.S. agriculture.

The U.S. government and U.S. society gain much from migrant laborers and give little back beyond criminalization, stress, and suffering (see Burawoy 1976, Rothenberg 1998, Arizona Daily Star 2005). This dishonest relationship must change. The Triqui people I know told me repeatedly that being given legal temporary worker status would be the most important change they could imagine. They have explained that want to keep their homes in Oaxaca and work in the U.S. one season at a time. Ironically, the U.S. government making it more risky and dangerous to cross the border since 9/11 means that now more migrant laborers stay in the U.S. for several years at a time before going home instead of coming just for harvest seasons. My Triqui companions support a fair temporary worker system that does not increase the power differential between employers and employees, as many fear the plan ambiguously outlined by the George W. Bush campaign in 2004 would do. Many would prefer some form of U.S. residency or temporary permission to enter and work in the U.S. over U.S. citizenship. These people want to keep their Mexican citizenship in order to maintain their homes their extended relatives in their hometowns in Oaxaca.

Globally, and perhaps most importantly, the formation of broad coalitions of people is necessary in order to envision and perform activist work for a more equitable international market such that people would not be forced to leave their homes to migrate in the first place. This includes, among other efforts, the campaigns of Global Exchange and other organizations to defeat the Central American Free Trade Agreement, activities of individuals and movements toward the dismantling and reformation of international economic institutions like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, and

movements attempting to promote local and independent producers instead of multinational corporate producers. Moving toward increasing international equity requires that organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971) uncover the hidden workings of hegemony such that those in power, the dominant classes, cannot seek their own interests unchallenged. People must actively engage in the war of position (Ibid.) mentioned in Appendix B not only via words and representations, but also concrete legal, political, civil, and economic actions. All of these means are necessary in order to ameliorate social suffering and its naturalization and to promote health and equality. With such a multi-faceted approach, we may move toward a future in which my Triqui companions have equal access to humane and healthy living and working conditions, are treated with respect, and no longer migrate within a one-way street of "giving away their strength."

APPENDIX A

ANTHROPOLOGICAL METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In order to gather the stories and experiences that have become this thesis, I spent more than one continuous year migrating with Triqui people from Oaxaca, Mexico, in addition to shorter visits before and afterward (see details in the Introduction). This follows the classical methodology of anthropology, participant-observation. This method involves long-term involvement and immersion in a particular social and cultural context. The anthropologist participates in everyday life over an extended period of time, while observing interactions and listening to conversations in order to identify significant practices, political economic forces, and cultural forms. The investigator regularly records events and conversations in detailed field notes. Participant-observation also entails a research verification technique called triangulation. This involves collecting several kinds of data from various sources in order to verify the validity of research findings. Types of data often include field note descriptions, taped and transcribed conversations and semi-structured interviews, photographs, surveys, clinical medical charts, newspaper and other media clips, and oral and written histories. These data are then compared and contrasted to better understand the phenomena in question.

Participant-observation is very useful in studying the complex realities of the world, which are not easily amenable to acontextual structured interviews, surveys, or questionnaires. While this methodology may include data from interviews and surveys, it differs significantly in that it is performed and analyzed within the situational knowledge

provided by long-term participation, observation, and relationship. The forces and experiences of violence as well as their interrelations within a diasporic environment make up an exceedingly complex and overdetermined reality that necessitates the multi-faceted and contextual methodology of participant-observation.

All my field notes from observations and experiences, as well as transcribed interviews, have given me the data of which I attempt to make sense here. The different forms of data described above require a complex and multi-facetted process of analysis. This analysis has been performed utilizing several methodologies within the context of supervision from faculty members of my dissertation committee as well as participation in a dissertation seminar with other anthropology doctoral students. A general overview of the initial stages of data analysis is provided by the general model of grounded theory (see Strauss and Corbin 1990). This model denotes an analytic methodology particularly useful in participant-observation studies. The methodology focuses on the systematic progression of organically uncovering social, cultural, and political economic processes behind the phenomena under investigation. The process of analysis begins as data is collected and proceeds through cycles of increasingly precise coding. Data related to a particular topic receive a particular, inductively produced code. Examples of coding from include: 1.) *sufrimiento* (suffering) as a metaphor commonly used by Oaxacan farm workers to describe life and labor in the U.S., 2) *the migrant problem* as a primary metaphor representing diasporic communities by U.S. mainstream media, and 3) *machine* as a significant metaphor through which farm worker bodies are understood by farm managers and owners. The data with a single code are compiled and analyzed for their characteristics and meanings. Then, data is coded axially, focusing on connections among categories.

In this project, data has been analyzed according to the primary foci of living and working conditions, social inequalities, health and health care, ethnicity, and prejudices. It has also been analyzed according to more inductive metaphors, such as the three codes mentioned above. These different coding systems have then been compared and contrasted. This allows the recognition of linkages among the different expressions of violence. Particular focus has been paid to the ways in which symbolic violences make social inequalities appear normal, natural, even necessary. Finally, data has been coded and analyzed in relation to the actions of individual subjects and collectivities with regard to the reproduction and transformation of social structures. As described above, the validity of analyses has been verified through the triangulation of various sources and kinds of data.

APPENDIX B

A FEW WORDS ON WORDS

THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN MIGRATION STUDIES

In the field of migration studies, the terms: "migrant," "migrant worker," "migrant laborer," and "farm worker" are used to denote the largely undocumented Mexican people who work harvesting fruit and vegetables in the U.S. While I use these terms in this dissertation in order to remain in conversation with the broader field, I must point out some of their class- and race-based connotations. The term, "farm worker," should most precisely apply to anyone and everyone who works on a farm. However, the owners, managers, checkers, administrative assistants, crop supervisors, crew bosses and field bosses are never called "farm workers." Both on the farm, in farm-related research, and in common usage, they are, instead, called by their job title. In addition, this phrase is not used to denote the white teenage berry picking crews on the Tanaka Farm. These workers are instead represented by the terms, "the White Crew" or "the Teen Crew." As it turns out, the phrase, "farm worker," applies only to those workers who harvest fruit and vegetables by hand as their primary job. Currently, all of these people are migrant workers from Latin America though the phrase was used in the past to signify other ethnic groups in the same posts of employment.

In addition, the term, "migrant," as well as its derivatives, "migrant worker" and "migrant laborer," should technically apply to anyone who migrates and works, anyone who moves among different locations or different nations as they work. However, wealthy people who migrate for work, like those described by Aihwa Ong (1999) or the architects from Mexico City currently designing the new UCSF research campus, are never represented by

these terms. They are, instead, called "international business people," sometimes "diasporic people," or simply by their job title and hometown like, "architects from Mexico City." Thus, the word, "migrant," carries distinct lower-class assumptions. In addition, lower-class people who migrate for work on farms or in factories from Canada or Europe are not called "migrants." They are usually called something akin to "temporary workers from Canada" or simply "factory workers from Canada." Thus, it appears that "migrant" also holds strong ethnic connotations. In common usage, "migrants" are only poor, Latin American people in the U.S.

On some levels, the use of these terms involves inequalities in respect based on class and ethnicity. Instead of being given respect for their work title and their home country, they are merged as one category of lower-class Latin American people. At the same time, these words are used so commonly within society as well as within health research that it would be unwieldy to use other terms throughout my dissertation. Thus, acknowledging the drawbacks, I will continue to use these words.

However, there are other words commonly used to refer to this group of people that are more detrimental and more easily avoided. Many news media and other organizations term undocumented migrants "illegal aliens." First, the word, "illegal," is an adjective modifying the migrant person. Yet, as the Division Chief of the Border Patrol in Washington State pointed out to me, these migrants are more hard working and law abiding than most U.S. citizens. He stated that they drive the speed limit, they pay their taxes, they work very hard, they avoid any activities that would draw attention from the police. The Division Chief went on to say that every once in a while, there is a Mexican migrant who commits a crime, just like there are U.S. Citizens who commit crimes, and these undocumented migrants are

sought and deported. Otherwise, he said, he is not interested in persecuting people who are working hard on U.S. farms. The only illegal thing they did was cross the border without the appropriate documentation. This, in his estimation, did not make them wholly "illegal." He prefers the term, "undocumented," which is much more precise, less broad, and less a trigger of anti-immigrant sentiments and fear. The criminal connotations of the word, "illegal," can be seen in many places, such as Proposition 187 in California, which states, "[Californians] have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state..." (quoted in Quesada 1999). Second, the word, "alien," connotes extreme difference, alterity, and often triggers fear. Because they are less detrimental and still easily understood, I use the terms, "undocumented" and "migrant," and strategically avoid the words, "illegal" and "alien."

In addition, I must point out the inconsistencies in the dichotomies commonly employed in migration studies: "refugee" versus "migrant," "political" versus "economic" migrant, "forced" versus "voluntary" migration (Morrissey 1986). The terms, "refugee," "political migrant," and "forced migration," are related. In order for one to be considered a refugee and receive asylum refugee privileges in the U.S., one must prove, among other things, that they were forced to migrate for political reasons. This, the opposing terms in the dichotomies above function as characteristics justifying exclusion from legal immigration status and the economic and political gains it would entail. The Triqui people I work with are all considered "voluntary, economic migrants" within traditional migration studies and U.S. government discourse. However, as the ethnographic data will show clearly, their migration is truly forced and there is no valid separation between the political and the economic forces at work. In order to survive, Triqui people are forced to leave their homes,

cross a fatal border, and work in an inhospitable environment. The economic conditions forcing them to migrate are caused directly by international and domestic policies that lead to global, regional, and local inequalities and suffering.

Finally, the dichotomy of "language" and "dialect" must be questioned. The word, "dialect," usually indicates a minor variety of a major language limited geographically to one area. A dialect is not considered a language proper, but rather a derivative of one. Triqui and other Latin American native languages are commonly known as dialects. The apple crop manager on the Tanaka Farm, who will be introduced in Chapter One, believed this implication about indigenous languages so much that he told me, "Oaxacans speak different dialects of Spanish. If I listen really closely and pay attention, I can understand it." However, linguistically, Mixteco and Triqui are entirely unrelated to Spanish. They are not romance languages. They are both their own languages, each has multiple tones, and they show some distant past relation, much like Spanish and English or English and Latin are related. Instead of understanding them as languages that were spoken in the area long before the Spanish conquest, calling them dialects implies that they developed as derivatives of the real language, Spanish. This misrepresentation supports the prevalent attitude that indigenous Mexicans are less important, or less *Mexican* than mestizo Mexicans.

THE WAR OF POSITION THROUGH WORDS

Antonio Gramsci, in *The Prison Notebooks* (1971), describes how one group or class of people, primarily the capital-owning class, come to control the economic and symbolic means of production. This hegemony exists with consent from the dominated classes, though it is not in their interest. However, Gramsci indicates that hegemony and its requisite consent

are never total (see also Hall 1986). There are always struggles over economic structures – ownership, redistribution, regulation – as well as over symbolic structures –representations and meanings. Gramsci differentiates among two primary means for achieving control of a society. The first is an all out military "war of manouvre" and the second is a more subtle "war of position." With the latter phrase, Gramsci indicates the ongoing struggle over meanings and cultural forms, which, in turn, affect political and economic structures.

As an example, the meanings attached to Latin American migrant workers with the use of terms like "illegal aliens" alongside the "contests of suffering" employed by anti-immigrant groups (Quesada 1999) produced fear and correlated justification of legislated exclusion from health care, education, and other services. These representations led to real legal and material hardships for those against whom they were directed. While anti-immigrant organizations utilized the tactics above, social scientists and other writers attempted to demonstrate the humanity as well as the indispensable and difficult work of migrant laborers.

Within the United States and most other post-industrial nations, military wars of force are not officially permitted (though one could argue that the militarization and criminalization of the inner-city, among other phenomena, is precisely a war of force). In these societies, struggles over hegemony occur primarily through wars of position. In order to bring about political and material change over such issues as immigrant rights and worker rights, then, one must engage in struggles over how immigrants and workers are represented and, therefore, perceived. These resulting perceptions lead to associated legal and economic inclusions, exclusions, liberations, and violences. While acting at this level of discourse and perception has real, significant effects and is, in large part, the intention of my writing, it is

only one level on which strategic action is necessary. Other loci for action and change are explored in the Conclusion.

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