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FIELDS IN THE FACTORY
THE MAKING OF PRECARIOUS STABILITY IN THE SALINAS VALLEY'S BAGGED SALAD INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Fields in the Factory

The Making of Precarious Stability in the Salinas Valley's Bagged Salad Industry

by

Ruben Espinoza

This dissertation explores the paradox of labor that is both precarious and stable. While most research in the social sciences approaches precarious labor from an organizational perspective, I analyze precarious labor as a lived experience through borderlands theory. My case study focuses on workers from a bagged salad company, Miracle Vegetable, in California's Salinas Valley. Data was collected through a workplace ethnography, interviews, and five years of fieldwork in the community. Individuals participating in my study were undocumented farm laborers when they arrived from Mexico. However, they are now unionized industrial workers with legal residency who have permanently settled in the Salinas Valley. From a subject-level perspective, their lives exemplify the contradiction of achieving upward social mobility while continuing to endure precarious socioeconomic conditions. Borderlands theory helps unpack the borders that workers navigate, such as being permanent residents but not citizens and unionized factory workers that earn similar wages as undocumented farm laborers. I argue that labor precarity and labor stability reinforce each other by conceptualizing *precarious stability*. This concept advances sociological understandings of precarious labor by moving beyond the binary of good and bad jobs or primary and secondary labor market sectors.

Chapter 1. Conceptualizing The Borderlands of Precarity and Stability

INTRODUCTION

The commute from my home to the factory was less than ten minutes. In the Salinas Valley, Highway 101 runs through the middle of some of the most fertile farmland in the world. The Salad Bowl, which is how locals refer to the Valley, is surrounded by the Santa Lucia and Gabilan mountain ranges. Not surprisingly, each day, whether my workday began at 7:00 a.m. or 7:00 p.m., scores of farmworkers lined both sides Highway 101. Most people are aware of the exploitation and harsh working conditions that farmworkers confront, but I was driving to work in a factory: Miracle Vegetable's bagged salad processing facility. Though farm laborers sometimes worked the land next to the building, the factory's walls and labor union were supposed to keep "the farm labor problem" [1] away. In reality, the fields are inseparable from factory. Fields are the last thing one sees when going into the building, and the first thing on the horizon when stepping outside.

This research is about the fields in the factory. In particular, it focuses on labor practices moving from Salinas Valley lettuce fields to bagged salad factories. On one hand, Miracle Vegetable has been involved in Salinas Valley lettuce since the 1930s. Over the decades, they have established a relationship with a diverse group of

[1] "The farm labor problem" is a term developed by H.R. Tolley (1921) to describe conditions that made farm work undesirable for U.S. citizens, including lack of mobility opportunities, insecure hours, and seasonal unemployment.

farm workers, including *Braceros*,[2] undocumented workers, permanent residents, citizens, Chinese, Japanese, Whites, Filipinos, Mexicans, and other ethnic groups with various migrant and/or citizenship statuses. The company opened its bagged salad processing facility in 1994. On the other hand, bagged salad workers at Miracle Vegetable used to be employed as nonunion farm laborers before acquiring their jobs in the unionized factory. Thus, workers at Miracle Vegetable are also accustomed to employment relations that are common in agriculture, including erratic scheduling, low wages, and fast-paced production. These histories and power relations between workers, the company, Salinas Valley lettuce, and California agriculture converge inside the factory.

To better understand this socio-historical merging of people, organization, and industry, this dissertation explores the borderlands between fields and factories, agriculture and industry, and farm laborers and industrial workers. My case study focuses on workers from Miracle Vegetable Company. Women and men employed by Miracle Vegetable tend to share five characteristics.[3] They: (1) were born in Mexico, (2) entered the U.S. as undocumented migrants, (3) were employed as farm laborers for a prolonged period, (4) gained legal residency, and (5) are currently classified as

[2] Male laborers who came to the United States from Mexico as guest workers. The Bracero Program ran from 1942 to 1964, though some exceptions were granted until 1967.

[3] While public statistics from Miracle Vegetable or the bagged salad industry are not available, most of the workers that I encountered over the course of this research matched this profile. In addition, I asked interviewees to estimate how many of their peers come from such a background. People commonly stated that 90 percent or more of their colleagues were undocumented farm laborers at one point.

unionized industrial workers due to their jobs in bagged salad factories.

I demonstrate that *precarious stability* exemplifies the character of labor in bagged salad factories because of its long-standing association with California agriculture and Salinas Valley lettuce. I argue that *precarious stability* in bagged salad is a product of this collective migration and employment background that Salinas Valley agribusiness has capitalized on. I define p*recarious stability* as a phenomenon that occurs when wage laborers manage to survive from paycheck to paycheck, remain in the same job for an extended period, and yet do not achieve socioeconomic security. In this case, a union job in low-wage food-processing delivers economic stability because individuals are doing relatively better than in the past, but it does not deliver economic security because of the employment and labor practices that enable the industry to flourish.

There are several reasons for studying labor and theorizing *precarious stability* through a case study that is focused on workers from Miracle Vegetable's salad processing factory in the Salinas Valley. Bagged salad has been consumed by 75 percent of households in the United States. Also, the Salinas Valley produces approximately 90 percent of bagged salad items sold in grocery stores across the country (Stuart 2010). Thus, most people in the United States have consumed bagged salad or processed leafy greens originating in the Salinas Valley. Retail sales for packaged produce and bagged salad are expected to rise from $5.6 billion in 2013 to $7 billion in 2018 (Packaged Facts 2014). These numbers suggest that many individuals are, and will continue to be, directly linked to the labor of bagged salad

workers across the Salinas Valley. Additionally, the difference in sales prices between harvested lettuce and processed lettuce, while prone to abrupt ebbs and flows, point toward extraordinary high profit margins. For example, harvested lettuce goes for $0.25/lb. compared to $3.00/lb. for processed lettuce (Stuart 2010). While there is some research on lettuce harvesting (Glass 1996; Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Thomas 1985), little is known about the social system of labor that generates this considerable value-added profitability in salad processing factories. Understanding this social system of labor will, therefore, provide insights into rising social inequalities across the modern economy[4].

There have been recent attempts by scholars to theorize the significance of agricultural labor systems for our contemporary society. Mize (2006) argues that post-World War II agricultural labor processes are an embodiment of 19th century despotic labor regimes, rather than hegemonic labor regimes of 20th century capitalism. According to Mize, the Bracero Program, a law that expired in 1967, is at the root of despotic labor regimes in modern agriculture because the program continues to be an archetype for the management of farm labor. By further exploring the legacy of the Bracero Program, Mitchell (2012) details how the guest worker agreement between Mexico and the United States ensured fruit deliveries *and* altered labor relations outside of agriculture. In sum, other industries emulated the agricultural model of labor management. For example, labor contractors served a key

[4] By social system of labor, I refer to the way in which social relations (e.g. gender, race, and class) become embedded within an industry (e.g. agribusiness), workplace (Miracle Vegetable), place (Salinas Valley), and/or labor process of a commodity (bagged salad manufacturing).

role in the supply of agricultural workers decades before temporary staffing agency did the same for manufacturing and financing. I extended Mitchell's argument by examining the impact that agribusiness' labor model on unionized workplaces.

The bagged salad industry offers scholars an opportunity to explore how precarious labor practices, which are most pervasive on U.S. farms according Mize (2006) and Mitchell (2012), manage to reproduce themselves in unionized factories. Bagged salad is organized around a hybrid character that conjoins farm agriculture and industrial factories. Additionally, its workforce consists of (mostly) former farmworkers. The body of knowledge of lettuce harvesting that researchers developed decades ago is, therefore, not just important because it documents a moment in time: it is also critical for understanding today's bagged salad factories. With an extensive history in lettuce production and bagged salad processing, Miracle Vegetable Company has been more influential than any other company in the industry over the years. Their dominance has been highlighted in past research, and explored in depth by Thomas' (1985) ethnography. Thomas examined how Miracle Vegetable capitalized on citizenship (i.e. legal and undocumented migrants) and gender relations (i.e. female packers and male harvesters) to establish more profitable labor processes and labor markets in Salinas Valley lettuce.

For such reasons, Thomas' study is the point of departure for this dissertation. His central research questions asked: why do agricultural workers earn less and have a lower status than blue-collar employees in comparable jobs? He answered the questions by highlighting how Salinas Valley agribusiness employers manipulate

long standing inequalities of citizenship and gender to prevent lettuce workers from capitalizing on their skills and productivity. This dissertation extends this earlier research by tracing the lineage of precarious labor relations from lettuce farms in the past to bagged salad factories in the modern economy.

RESEARCH PUZZLES

Two research puzzles focused on the social system of labor in bagged salad guide this research. First, the experiences of bagged salad workers help unpack the puzzle of labor that is simultaneously precarious and stable. Debates about precarious labor have captured the attention of the social sciences in recent years. Influential literature in the sociology of work, such as Standing (2011 & 2014) and Kalleberg (2008 & 2011), tends to focus on the structural conditions or outcomes that underpin precarious labor. In other words, what led to the rise of precarious labor and how are workers affected by it? Common answers to those questions range from neoliberal policies and globalization (structural conditions) to job insecurity and increased hazards in the workplace (outcomes). I advance theoretical understandings of precarious labor by arguing that *stability* is also a key condition that fosters the reproduction of precarious labor. In short, my intervention in this literature is that *labor precarity and labor stability reinforce each other*. For example, while it is common to find workers with 10 or 20 years of seniority at Miracle Vegetable, it is

equally uncommon to find workers that have achieved economic security[5] because of that stable employment. I argue that understandings of precarious labor should be embedded with an understanding of people that find a semblance of stability through otherwise precarious jobs. Thus, the concept of *precarious stability* ultimately contributes to knowledge about the reproduction of social inequalities through wage labor relations.

The second research puzzle supplements the first by addressing the reasons why economic security remains elusive for bagged salad workers. Traditionally, a political reclassification from undocumented migrant to legal resident, a labor market upgrade from farm laborer to industrial worker, and an employment transition from a nonunion farm to a unionized factory has resulted in socioeconomic gains for workers. Yet, in recent years, not only in bagged salad factories but also in other industries ranging from meat packing to automobile manufacturing, these tools of social mobility (legality, industrialization, and unionization) have not hindered the proliferation of precarious labor relations. I contend that economic security is difficult to achieve because long-standing power dynamics in lettuce fields have been reproduced in bagged salad factories.

In other words, long-standing social inequalities nullify the degree of security that Salinas Valley workers achieve through legalization, unionization, and industrialization. Such social gains are not powerful enough to overcome the

[5] I define "economic security" as having the ability to cover living expenses in the absence/delay/loss of income, or despite the arrival of bad health, unemployment, or another socioeconomic calamity that affects one's ability to earn money.

historical marginalization that farm workers have endured for centuries. This is true even when the population is no longer undocumented or working in the fields. For example, bagged salad workers at Miracle Vegetable are paid slightly above the minimum wage in California. Packers and stackers, for instance, earn $10.30 and $10.50/hour respectively. This wage structure suggests that legalization, industrialization, and unionization did not push bagged salad workers into a higher wage bracket vis-à-vis farm laborers, who typically earn the minimum wage of $10/hour in California[6]. However, workers moved up the social ladder by going from the field to the factory and by gaining some legal protections when they became legal residents. This puzzle that I explore, therefore, problematizes the binary of good and bad jobs by highlighting how workers give meaning to a bad job (Kalleberg 2009 & 2011).

From these puzzles, two research questions arise that will be the focus of this dissertation. First, how is a job in bagged salad both precarious and stable? I focus on how individuals' past experiences, as undocumented farm laborers, interacts with their current lifestyles as bagged salad workers to examine this question. Second, why are workers unable to convert their social gains of unionization, industrialization, and legalization into economic security? I analyze how precarious labor and labor stability reinforce each other in the lives of bagged salad workers to shed light on the reproduction of social inequality. To begin this task, I focus on literature in the

[6] While there are moments, particularly during labor shortages, when farm laborers are paid above the minimum wage, see http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-fi-farms-immigration/ for example, historically that has not been the case.

sociology of work, labor markets, precarious labor, intersectionality, and borderlands theory.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sociology of Work

Understanding social inequality has been a staple in the sociology of work and labor market research. Marx (1978) introduced a starting point for the sociology of work by focusing on the exploitation and class struggle that he believed was fundamental for the development and reproduction of capitalism. For Marx, capitalism's reproduction depended on its ability to extract a surplus from labor. Generating a surplus was accomplished in the production process of commodity making because workers came to view the labor process[7], rather than the commodity market, as the place where their labor is exchanged for wages. From a worker's perspective, the retail value of the commodity is separated from its production, so the hours he or she works in production becomes the point of reference that workers are concerned with. Capitalism can then sustain itself by paying workers enough to purchase the essentials (food, clothing, housing, and so on) of their own reproduction. According to Marx (1978), an outcome of this arrangement is that workers are alienated from their own labor, the items they produce, other workers, and from their very essence as humans.

[7] Labor processes are "means by which objects, people, tools, knowledge, and tasks are organized so that they are transformed into different objects or services having some value for others" (Wardell 1999: 4).

Since Marx, literature in the sociology of work has been grounded in the idea that labor is a different type of commodity. Polanyi (1944) theorized labor as a *fictitious commodity*. Along with money and land, which are products of finance mechanisms and nature respectively, labor is a *fictitious commodity* since it can only exist as a market commodity through social arrangements rather than as something produced in a factory. As Polanyi writes, "labor is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself, which in turn is not produced for sale but for entirely different reasons, nor can that activity be detached from the rest of life, be stored or mobilized" (Polanyi 1944: 68). A key task in the sociology of work is to explain how labor becomes a *fictitious commodity*. Polanyi (1957) later moved away from an economic determinism framework and developed the *embeddedness approach* to underscore how economic actions are influenced my noneconomic social relations. His argument rested on the notion that social science research cannot assume certain free market elements popularized in neoclassical economics, such as natural balance or supply and demand theories. Instead, social science needs to consider how non-market institutions affect the economic realm of society. Culture, religion, politics, and family are among the many forms of non-market spaces that, nevertheless, affect a market economy. Polanyi's embeddedness approach ultimately helps us better understand the non-market institutions that help make labor a fictitious commodity. For this study, the important thing is to explain the social arrangements that make labor precarious and stable.

The reproduction of capitalism, whether inside a workplace, through its

negotiations with labor, or in interactions with noneconomic institutions, also requires an analysis of power relations. In his seminal book, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, Braverman (1974) introduced an analysis of power directed at Marx's theory of alienation and labor process. Braverman's deskilling thesis posits that employers' unmitigated control over the labor process results in hyper routinization, repetition, and simplistic divisions of tasks. Taylorism, the scientific organization of work, allows management to retain ownership of the skills of production, making individual workers inconsequential because virtually anyone could be plugged into the labor process without compromising productivity. Following Braverman, Edwards (1979) analyzed labor control by conceptualizing three managerial models: simple, technical and bureaucratic. Simple control arose in the early stages of capitalism, and continues in small workplaces where face-to-face encounters between owner and employee are common. Technical and bureaucratic control became staples of larger organizations and advanced industrialization. Machinery that sets the pace of work is an example of technical control, while policies that map worker mobility within a company, including policies developed by collective bargaining agreements, is a form of bureaucratic control.

The scientific management of workers was the focal point for Marx, Braverman and Edwards, yet, except for Edwards, the agency of individual workers was not a topic that early labor control and labor process literature covered extensively. Burawoy (1979) introduced worker agency and worker consent into labor process research by challenging the Marx's assumption that workers'

willingness to maximize their own productivity was derived strictly from coercion. "Marx," argued Burawoy, "had no place in his theory of labor processes for the organization of consent, for the necessity to elicit a willingness to cooperate in the translation of labor power into labor" (Burawoy 1979: 27). Worker consent materializes because incentives and rewards compel individuals to work hard, avoid labor disruptions, and develop an intrinsic attachment with their employer. Consent ultimately leads workers to "regard their future livelihood as contingent on the survival and expansion of their capitalist employer" and "accept theories of profit that reflect the experiences of the capitalist seeking profit through the sale of commodities" (Burawoy 1979: 29). In other words, while an individual worker may be maximizing his or her performance out of self-interest, the employer also benefits in the process.

The political control of workers, which is a form of embeddedness, is an additional layer that organizes worker consent and labor relations in workplaces. According to later work by Burawoy (1985), capital influences the workplace via the state through a *political apparatus of production*. Labor laws, trade policies, business regulations, labor and consumption markets, and enforcement agencies are areas where the *political apparatus of production* intervenes. The state also absorbs some of the costs associated with the reproduction of labor by providing resources to the unemployed, children, the retired, and the sick. Burawoy identified this social contract between the state, capital and the population as *hegemonic labor regimes*. Hegemonic regimes contrasted with earlier *despotic regimes* that relied on coercion to deliver compliance from labor. More recently *hegemonic despotism*, based on a

shrinking welfare state and intensified market liberation, appears as the new regime. In short, *hegemonic despotism* places the onus for survival on the individual. The state's welfare system is weakened, while the influence of capital over the state and its people is strengthened.

A key point that Burawoy helps us realize is that the inside and outside (of a workplace or related facility) feed of each other, so neither can be treated in isolation. This is particularly a salient point to consider for research on farmworker populations because they have been dissimilar from the factory workers that people from Marx to Burawoy were concerned with, i.e. (predominately) White men in factories with citizenship recognition. One weakness of early research in the sociology of work was in fact its overemphasis on factory work and male workers.

Research on agricultural workers helped advance the sociology of work because it focused on a population that had been ignored by earlier theorists. By demonstrating that job allocation in Salinas Valley lettuce harvesting correlated with one's citizenship status and gender, Thomas (1985) demonstrated that labor process and labor control theories require an accounting of how they are shaped by social and political institutions. Essentially, the focus should be on how "labor process and labor markets, on the one side, and social and political institutions, on the other, s*tructure one another*" (9). Wells (1996), in her study of strawberry production in the Central Coast of California, extended Thomas' argument by highlighting that employers do not simply manipulate social relations to their advantage. Instead, all stakeholders, including workers, employers, and governments, are influenced by social, political

and cultural struggles as they negotiate labor relations with each other. For example, the United Farm Workers would never have won union contracts if agribusiness employers could unilaterally impose their terms always and under any context. Wells' research is also important because she found differences in labor practices within micro-regions of the Central Coast.

Because of geographic differences, the study of "place" has been more important for more recent sociological research on work. McKay (2006) focuses on how labor control regimes in export processing zones reach into their workers' households through screening units. This insures that only ideal workers, those socially compatible with the firm's labor model, are hired. By comparing labor relations in different regions of China, Lee (2007) highlights the limits of labor control. In Lee's case, the regionally and generationally structured agency of workers creates a buffer against exploitation, as protesters compel the state to address grievances brought by older Maoists or younger migrants. Sallaz (2009) also highlights how similar workplaces in different locations, casinos in Nevada and South Africa, base their labor control mechanisms on the social terrain of each area. The key factors that grant casino management power over workers are anti-union sentiments and low-wage norms in Nevada, and the legacy of apartheid in South Africa. Sallaz's research is also significant because it conceptualizes a *service production regime*, which is indicative of the service economy that early labor process research was not equipped to address because of its concern with manufacturing and factory work.

The magnified attention that the sociology of work has paid to social relations

outside the workplace makes evident the importance of being cognizant of employment opportunities and how individuals are matched with those opportunities at any given moment. Bagged salad workers have settled in the Salinas Valley, but migrants from Mexico keep coming. This give agribusiness firms the necessary labor supply to move a select group of workers into their bagged salad factories. The next section reviews labor market literature, particularly theories of segmentation and social networks, to underscore the mechanisms that match workers to jobs.

Labor Markets: Segmentation and Social Networks

Labor markets are processes that match workers to jobs, and are composed of interactions between employees, employers, firms, jobs, contracts and networks. Sociological research on labor markets goes beyond notions of supply and demand by also addressing noneconomic elements that connect workers to jobs. State governance, social norms, institutions, demographics, worker perceptions, and historical conjunctures shape labor markets and labor market research in sociology (Tilly and Tilly 1998: 19-25 & 170-175). As such, it is advantageous to think of labor markets in terms of segmentation and social networks rather than through only human capital and economic rationality.

Originally conceptualized in economic scholarship as an alternative to the theory of supply and demand, *labor market segmentation* theory is now widely accepted in the sociology of work. Doeringer and Piore (1971) initiated the first phase of labor market segmentation by theorizing *dual labor markets* to explain the

unevenness of problems such as poverty and unemployment between Anglos and African Americans, men and women, union and nonunion workers, and so on. Dual labor market theory divides the labor market into a *primary labor market*, which consists of well-paying, prestigious jobs that come with opportunities for advancement, and a *secondary labor market*, known for low-paying, low security, low mobility, and high-turnover jobs. The dual approach scrutinized not only the criterion that ties individuals to jobs, but also the barriers that prevent crossover among workers in primary and secondary labor market sectors.

While institutional discrimination was a focus in dual labor market theory, Bonacich (1972) established *split labor market theory* to elucidate how large-scale social forces shape competition between racial groups. There are two ways that a labor market is split: 1) when contending racial groups have unequal political power, resulting in the more powerful group controlling the employment networks, or 2) when one group's labor costs are significantly lower, at which point, employers select the cheaper source of labor. The "Latinization" of poultry processing work (Griffith 1995) can be understood with split labor market theory. Poultry processors began to relocate into the southern U.S. in the 1970s because of the region's supply of African American women, rural Whites, and nonunion labor. The infusion of Latino immigrants into southern agricultural fields during the 1980s helped create employment networks that eventually connected with poultry processing employers. Similar stories about the "Latinization" of meat processing are found in Kansas (Stull and Broadway 2004) and Texas (Midkiff 2004), and seafood processing in North

Carolina (Griffith 2011). What these stories have in common is that the cheaper source of labor displaces the more expensive one. In her study of construction labor markets in Baltimore, Royster (2003) identifies how splits occur through the mechanism of political power. African American men were excluded from blue-collar job networks because of the historical imprint left by segregated labor unions. As such, the continuous reproduction of social networks that white-men developed during the era of institutionally segregated labor unions continues to impede African American men from entering good-paying construction jobs.

Split labor market theory addresses issues of political power and race, however, it has a difficult time explaining uneven outcomes between individuals of the same racial or social group. *Segmented labor market theory* enhanced dual labor markets and is an alternative to split labor markets because of its critical attention to divisions among working classes. Reich, Gordon and Edwards (1973) argued for the necessity of *segmented labor market* analyses because the continued significance of race, gender, and class was evident in employment outcomes. The authors defined labor market segmentation "as the historical process whereby political economic forces encourage the division of the labor market into separate submarkets, or segments, distinguished by different labor market characteristics and behavioral rules" (1973: 359). Segmented theory posits that race, class and gender interact with labor markets, institutions, governance structures, and regulations to produce inequality among workers. Segmented theory also looks for multi-causal factors to explain different labor market outcomes for people from the same social group.

Piore (1979) later extended *dual* and *segmented labor market theory* to account for immigrant workers. An emphasis on the demand of labor rather than its supply, and the overall social context of employment are salient factors for labor market research on immigrants. For example, negative attributes attached to jobs (e.g. dirty, low-wage, physical labor) pushes native workers away from such employment, creating a need that is filled by immigrant workers. Employers and the state are key actors since they facilitate the "pull" of immigrants into niche labor markets not occupied by citizen workers. This can be accomplished by policies of the state and rhetoric of employers. Today, the incorporation of immigrant workers, documented and undocumented, from agricultural labor markets is the most important cost saving strategy for meat and poultry processing companies in the Great Plains (Gouveia 1994). This labor market scenario – where workers move from farm to factory – is relevant for bagged salad factories in the Salinas Valley since companies also control farmland and factories in the Valley.

As empirical research moved on, segmented labor market approaches became more complicated. For example, the borders between primary and secondary labor market sectors became less discernable. In fact, Portes and Bach (1985) concluded that immigrants could reside in or create a hybrid labor market sector. This alternative labor market sector, or the third sector, provides structures of mobility to immigrants because of their embeddedness within the social network that dominates the workplace. Immigrants enter this third sector as low status, low-wage workers, but their social network, which Portes and Bach compare to an immigrant enclave,

provides "immigrants with significant economic returns to education and experience, as well as the very real prospect of upward socioeconomic mobility, thus replacing features of the primary sector" (38). Findings by Thomas (1985) also problematized conventional understandings of primary and secondary sectors as lettuce harvesting jobs displayed characteristics consistent with both: low wages, physically demanding work, and limited advancement (secondary), but also high stability, skilled labor, and low turnover (primary). The key labor market factors for Thomas were the control of labor supply and the social composition of workers. This demonstrates that an emphasis on workers, rather than social structures or supply and demand theories, can unmask the key organizing principles in labor markets.

One way to focus on individual workers is by first capturing the spatialization of labor markets, including their local traits, and variation across time and between places. As demonstrated by Peck (1996), segmented theories view the distribution of opportunities in each labor market as "highly sensitive to the ascribed rather than achieved characteristic of the work force" (54) and as "a *socially constructed and politically mediated* [Peck's emphasis] structure of conflict and accommodation among contending forces" (4). A central objective for Peck is to conceptualize *local labor markets*, which are "institutional sites at which place and space intersect… social arenas in which the domain of capital comes in conflict with that of labor" (1996: 16). The key for Peck is to identify the "local" about a *local labor market.* McCall's (2001) quantitative research on regional labor markets demonstrates how a traditional category like "inequality" is processed at the regional level. The mesocomparative

method, as conceptualized by McCall, compares regions based on characteristics such as deindustrialization or high immigration to establish "*how and why relationships between two or more dimensions of inequality within labor markets vary across labor markets* [McCall's emphasis]" (17). For example, one regional labor market may have high inequality between Black and White men, but not necessarily between White women and Black women. Another labor market may have pervasive inequality between women and men, but not high racial inequality between Blacks and Whites.

Analyses of social networks are another way to unpack divergent labor market outcomes. Waldinger and Lichter (2003) approached their study of the social organization of labor between African American and Latino immigrant workers in Los Angeles by drawing attention to their employment networks. The authors utilized a *dual frame of reference* framework (Piore 1979) to interpret how immigrant workers rationalized their position in the labor market. Dual frame of reference highlights how immigrant workers rationalize their labor market options. In sum, immigrants compare available jobs in their home country to those of their host nations. In this context, a bad job for a U.S. citizen becomes a good job from an immigrant worker perspective. Employers also project narrations that create ideal workers for their business model (e.g. hard-working immigrants instead of lazy Americans). This helps explain the different concentration levels of African American and Latinos in furniture manufacturing, printing, department stores, hotels, restaurants, and hospitals. Lopez (2011) focused on competition between indigenous

and mestizo Mexicans farm workers in California, documenting how family ties and settlement help the latter, while the former rely on traditional labor organizations such as labor unions.

So far, I have reviewed how social inequalities are produced and reproduced through the workplace, labor process, labor market, and place. Researchers such as Piore (1979), Thomas (1985), Wells (1996), Waldinger and Lichter (2003), and Lopez (2011) help get us closer to the bagged salad population because of their focus on immigrant and/or farm workers. This is an important point because scholars have attributed the rise of precarious labor to the rapid growth of migrant workers in the United States, Global North, and around the world (Kalleberg 2009 & 2011; Standing 2011 & 2014). In other words, as migration has increased through neoliberalism and globalization, an escalation of precarious labor has accompanied the rise in migration. Next, I review literature on precarious labor and how individual workers react to precariousness.

Precarious Labor

The rise of precarious labor in the new millennium has captured the attention of researchers from across the globe. Smith (2001) details how individuals in the U.S. (including blue-collar, white-collar, unemployed, temporary, union and nonunion workers) adapt to a new era of economic uncertainty, risk, and insecurity. She demonstrates that dimensions of work are unevenly precarious across situations, so workers confront these conditions individually, in their own workplaces, and with the

best available repertoire at their disposal. Kalleberg (2009; 2011) synthesizes the structural causes that underpin precarious labor and employment relations in the neoliberal era. Among the structural changes are market liberalization, waning union membership, growth of the service sector, and greater inclusion of women, people of color, and immigrants in the workforce. These structural changes have made the 21st century workforces less secure, highly flexible, and more seasonal and part-time.

While Smith and Kalleberg helped establish a framework to understand precarious labor, few scholars have influenced our knowledge on the subject than Standing (2011; 2014; 2016). Standing pushes this debate further by detailing the emergence of new class of workers altogether: *the precariat*. What distinguishes the precariat from the working-class proletariat is, among other things, a degraded social standing (e.g. industrial citizenship), heightened insecurities inside and outside the workplace, and lack of collective bargaining. Broadly speaking, the precariat and the proletariat are divided by the degree of precarity, stability, and security that each has achieved in labor, work, and employment relations.

In other words, Standing differentiates between the precariat, which represent a class in the making, and the proletariat, which has greater security in the workplace, labor market, and in periods of unemployment and retirement. Another hallmark of the precariat is their lack of formal citizenship since many of them are undocumented immigrants. Thus, the precariat receives a smaller wage exchange based on their labor power, total hours worked, and educational attainment. The proletariat also tends to view the precariat as a threat, rather than as an ally, in working-class struggles against

capital (Standing 2016). Standing's concept of the precariat was influenced by research on migrant populations across the globe and at different points in time.

Still, other scholars point towards a need to dig deeper into the Global South to better theorize precarious labor. Braga (2016) argues that labor relations in Brazil provide evidence supporting of the idea that the precariat, like the proletariat, is a member of the working-class. The main impediment for the Brazilian precariat is its high degree of exploitability, not hostility from labor unions. Scully (2016) cautions scholars to move beyond universal notions of precarious labor and precarity. He argues that several defining features of Standing's precariat have been long-standing in labor relations across the Global South and Brazil. Hence, the precariat class and precarious labor are not a new or universal phenomenon.

What makes the case of bagged salad workers imperative for the debate among Standing, Braga and Scully is that this workforce concurs with and contradicts each camp's articulation of the precariat, precarity, and precarious labor. Bagged salad workers are migrants originally from the Global South working in industrial factories in the Global North. They are not citizens per se, but they are (predominantly) permanent residents with political protections that are not extended to undocumented migrants. Bagged salad workers have also been incorporated into the American labor movement due to their affiliation with prominent labor unions like the United Food and Commercials Workers and the Teamsters. Nonetheless, their economic gains and labor securities are not on par with those of other union workers. Comprehending this paradox between precarity and stability that bagged salad

workers endure is the focus of this research.

Researchers are also now considering how individuals react to precarity. Jørgensen's (2016) study on migrant political action organizations reveals that precarity is more than an economic condition – it is also a social space, identity, and process. Identifying as a precariat becomes a point of departure that can be utilized to contest social inequalities and unequal treatment. Paret and Gleeson (2016) pay attention to the nexus of agency, migration, and precarity. According to them, migrant involvement inside particular industries, deportation regimes, and patterns of collective-action provide a window into the mutating character of precarity. "An analysis of precarity," they argue, "thus calls for the study of broader political and economic shifts, and how they reshape the relationships between individuals and groups on the one hand, and capital and the state on the other" (280).

Despite the greater attention paid to precarious labor, a critical engagement with agriculture and agricultural workers has been generally absent in labor studies literature. The irony of this omission is that social science accounts of California agriculture have yielded data that is pertinent for modern labor relations. One could even argue that agricultural labor has always been imbued with uncertainty, insecurity, risk, and instability (Friedland 1994), a space of feeble labor power even in moments when union density was relatively high (Bardacke 2011; Garcia 2012; Valdes 2011), and reliant on minority, women, and migrant workers (Branch 2011; Cohen 2011; Galarza 1977; Holmes 2013; Ngai 2005).

The interaction between citizenship, gender, race, and class in California

agricultural has been examined through labor process theory. Thomas (1985) documents the interplay between gender and citizenship in the Salinas Valley's lettuce industry. He finds that the allocation of individuals across the labor process hinges on a convergence of gender and citizenship classifications, historical forces, and power relations. Employers manipulate these social relations, such as assigning women with legal status to packing jobs and undocumented migrant men to cutting crews, to engender agribusiness-friendly outcomes in the organization of work, wages and labor control. More recent studies have addressed the growing racial and ethnic heterogeneity among Mexican farm workers in California (Lopez 2007; Lopez 2011). These studies further highlight how experiences of work are related to race, legal status, and length of residency.

Agency is one of the central factors that influences whether a person's situation is precarious and/or stable. Du Bry (2007) emphasizes the overall social position of individuals in his study of farm workers living in Mecca, California. He concludes that the noneconomic dimensions of employment matter to farm workers even when only negligible differences exist between economic ones. Farm workers highlighted higher status jobs and more prestigious agricultural firms as examples of upward social mobility. Wells (2013) focuses on the social mobility that daughters and granddaughters of farm workers experience in a rural California community. She uncovers that having farm worker parents and living in a farm labor area informs these women's perceptions about work and family throughout their lives. For instance, these women did not consider the option of being a stay-at-home mother since dual

working-parents were characteristic of their childhood. Du Bry and Wells demonstrate that farm workers develop their own system to access labor relations and create their own meanings that may or may not match conventional understandings of precarity and precarious labor.

In sum, scholarship that is framed through the lived experience of laborers will reveal information that may not be captured if one establishes set parameters of precarity before the study. This framework is fundamental for the conceptualization of precarious stability in the Salinas Valley's bagged salad industry. As Tilly and Tilly (1998: 139) argue, organizations are rarely, if ever, created from starch. Instead, they are pieced together through combinations of existing social relations, structures, understandings, and performances. California agriculture and the Salinas Valley lettuce industry provided the social structures, workers, and employers for precarious stability in bagged salad factories.

Yet, to fully appreciate precarious stability, a greater focus on the diversity of bagged salad workers is necessary. A lack of gender and racial analyses is perhaps the most prominent critique of early research in the sociology of work. Since this research calls for greater attention on individuals, an intersectional analysis is needed as well. As Mosoeta, Stillerman, and Tilly (2016) argue, intersectional analyses have been virtually absent in studies of precarious labor. Forms of precarious labor have always existed, so scholars need to better grasp facets of precarious labor that change across time, space, and context. Intersectionality is a useful framework to explore precarity and precarious labor because it positions structural forces within individuals

and their ascribed statuses.

Intersectionality: Race and Gender

As formulated by Crenshaw (1989; 1991), the theory of intersectionality focuses on the ways in which race, gender, class and other ascribed social characteristics are in constant interactions with each other. These characteristics can be present individual as well. The relevance of intersectionality for most research is due its emphasis on inequalities. In short, systems of oppression are in constant interaction with individuals, so intersectionality provides a framework to unpack those inequalities. West and Zimmerman (1987) demonstrated how gender is a learned condition, rather than something innate. The concept of *doing gender* is grounded in the idea that individuals learn how to act their gender beginning in early age development. The basis for *doing gender*, throughout one's life, is socially embedded in behavioral differences between women and men, and boys and girls. Over time, gender norms and ideals become self-regulating, and are reproduced in organizations, institutions, interactions, and other social arrangements.

Literature on the sociology of work and labor markets that was reviewed earlier paid attention to class, but gender and race area also reproduced in organizations and workplaces. Race and class are in fact processes that individuals learn to perform like and in conjunction with gender (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations was a breakthrough that advanced gendered analyses in the sociology of work. The theory examines "organizations as

gendered processes in which both gender and sexuality have been obscured through a gender-neutral, asexual discourse, and suggest some of the ways that gender, the body, and sexuality are part of the processes of control in work organizations" (140). The basic argument is that while organizations may not admit or address how gender, race, and sexuality are embedded in their infrastructures, they are nonetheless present in the social fabric that organizes work. Masculinity, for example, is a characteristic associated with leadership, so men are more likely to be placed in positions of leadership. Empirical studies confirm this gendered outcome by demonstrating that women with masculine traits, like assertiveness or competitiveness, are more likely to achieve upward mobility in American law firms (Kay and Hagan 1998), in the labor market prior to employment (Huffman and Torres 2002), and in Australian agricultural agencies (Pini 2005). Motherhood and fatherhood also provide windows into gender relations at workplaces, as studies conclude that mothers are penalized in wages depending on how many children they have (Budig and England 2001), and are even denied opportunities and rewards when they do not fit the feminized notion of a gentle and nurturing woman (Bernard and Correll 2010). By contrast, new fathers typically receive a wage increase if they possess hegemonic masculine traits such as whiteness, heterosexuality, and a professional occupation. However, the fatherhood bonus is nonexistent for vast majorities of manual laborers and African American men (Hodges and Budig 2010). Different outcomes around the fatherhood bonus support the continued usefulness of intersectionality and the need to be critical of individuals as independent from organizations.

While gendered organizations theory proved beneficial, one shortcoming with the theory is that Acker (1990) concept treated gender as an inherent quality of organizations. Britton (2000) advanced the theory by emphasizing the need to study dimensions within gendered organizations. "Conceptualizing bureaucratic organizations as inherently gendered," writes Britton, "may keep us from seeing settings in which gender is less salient and can thus obscure those points of leverage that might be used to produce change" (2000: 423). Organizations theorized as gendered are also frequently constructed as either feminized or masculinized rather than, according to Britton, the more appropriate label of male- or female-dominated. This distinction is necessary because "male" jobs can contain qualities of femininity and "female" jobs may be consistent with masculinity. For instance, female prison guards do not necessarily add femininity to the occupation. Femininities and masculinities associated with certain occupations also shift during historically specific moments, so comparing gender in relation to hegemonic masculinity or femininity runs the risk of removing "the historically and contextually specific conditions under which gendering occurs" (Britton 2000: 427).

The focus should, therefore, not be only on gender, but on other social factors that produced inequalities. Acker (2006) later theorized *inequality regimes* to account for the multiple areas of intersectionality that produce inequality among workforce participants in localized settings. Inequality regimes are defined as "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations" (443: 2006).

Workplace organizations are important for Acker because they are prominent spaces where inequalities are made and/or remade.

While literature on farmworkers has focused on gender relations (Thomas 1985; Branch 2011: 27-48; Cohen 2011), race and racialization is the ascribed status that has traditionally received more attention. W.E.B Du Bois defined *race* as a group-identity dependent on common history, laws, religion, blood, similar habits of thought, and a consciousness of togetherness. A major point for Du Bois was that race, racial categories, and racial characteristics could be voluntarily adopted, accepted, and practiced by communities, or involuntary identifications that outside groups impose on corresponding populations (Du Bois 1996: 38-47). Omi and Winant (1994) theorized *racial formation* as a process through which economic, political and social forces merge to establish racial categories, their meanings, and hierarchies. The authors also introduced the concept of *racialization,* which signifies the *process* of how racial identities and meanings are attached to groups. A few years later, Bonilla-Silva (1996) conceptualized *racialized social systems* to analyze the way racial categories of today transcend their original formulations. *Racialized social systems* consider time, space, and historical contingency when assessing race and race relations. This was a necessary shift according to Bonilla-Silva because the theory of *racial formations* tended to overemphasize the state and examine race as a straight continuum.

More recently, race and racism have been theorized as still operational but obscured by neoliberal politics of individuality and free markets (Goldberg 2009),

and as subconsciously embedded in "post-racial" cultural practices (Perry 2011). These studies, however, do not focus on how post-racial or free-market ideologies conjoin race with workers and labor processes. Indeed, race in agricultural work is one of the preeminent arcs in the history of California, as many cities and towns were established across the state through agricultural clusters of farms, merchants, banks, cooperatives, suppliers, and exploited farm workers (Walker 2004). While no racial group has ever been in possession of all agricultural jobs in a given period, there have been distinguishable waves of agricultural workers throughout the history of California.

Still, the history race relations in California agriculture highlights how a racial system is reproduced within a single occupation, even as the participants change. The initial phase of California agriculture took place in the Spanish colonial era, where, as documented by Monroy (1995), Native Californians laboring in Missions became the first incarnation of the racialized farmworker. As the economics of food shifted from local to global retail markets, Padres in charge of maintaining California Missions incorporated capitalist business practices into daily life. The missions' new capitalist labor control system included a work-leader, usually a Spanish soldier known as the *mayordomo*. Spaniards justified the uprooting and colonization of Natives with racialized ideologies, particularly ones compared with the Christian work ethic. The stereotype of the infantile Native linked with the labor needs of California Missions when agricultural work came to be viewed as ideal employment for docile, unambitious, and uncivilized people.

While Spaniards installed the social foundation for farm work in California, Mexican independence in 1810 did not bring an end to the racialized labor system. Pitti's (2003) historical study of race relations in Northern California illustrates how the Mexican Rancho era, in which Mexican estates were granted control of agricultural lands formerly managed by Spanish Missions, relied on a continuation of the racialized labor system. Native Californians continued to provide the labor for Mexican Ranchos, the *mayordomo* labor regime remained a staple in the organization of work, and race continued to inform how farm work and farm workers were perceived. The key difference after Mexican independence was that Mexican nationals, particular those with *mestizo* heritages, replaced Spaniards at the top of the racial hierarchy. As California moved from Mexican to American control, the social system of agriculture adjusted to new populations. The essential changes were that Anglo Americans replaced Mexicans atop the racial hierarchy, that Native Californians were no longer a large enough group to serve as a source of labor supply, and that Mexicans in California were not considered a good source of labor by Anglo owners.

In an account of farm worker history, Daniel (1981) chronicles how California agribusiness dealt with labor shortages between 1870 and 1941. Race, nation and citizenship were again at the crux of these accounts, as ideal notions adopted by Anglo Americans compelled them to reject farm labor. One reason why this occurred was due to Americans' conception of farming that stemmed from Jeffersonian ideals. The ideology of Jeffersonian agrarianism, depicting male farmers

as the backbone that enabled America to function as a free and democratic nation, moved westward along with migrants. When Anglo migrants encountered agribusiness for the first time, it clashed with their understanding of being a farm hand. Yet, the exploitation of someone needed to continue in order for California agriculture to expand**.**

The next major group constructed as ideal farmworkers were the Chinese. As a San Francisco newspaper reported, the Chinese were short (a necessary trait for stoop labor), tolerable to hot climate, and came with an innate lack of ambition (Daniel 1981: 63). The docile, infantile, unambitious, and inferior non-Christian label transitioned from Natives to Chinese immigrants in the 1850s. Similar to the conflict that existed between Spanish, Mexican, and indigenous labor in earlier generations, white laborers in the post-annexation period of California organized against Chinese immigrants. This labor market competition was based on class, race, and gender. As the Chinese population declined due to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the Japanese became the new face of California farm labor (Daniel 1981; Ngai 2005). Once again, the racialized farm worker label navigated toward the new group of farm workers. Mexican and Filipino immigrants followed this same line of racialization as they began to replace Japanese farm workers in the early 20th century. Studies have also addressed how people of Mexican ethnicity were racialized during the mid-twentieth century in California (Ngai 2005) and the Salinas Valley (Flores 2016).

The purpose of this review on intersectionality, particular race and gender, is to demonstrate how bagged salad factories, since they are also organizations, learn to

produce inequalities. In essence, the fields that go into factories carry this social history of class, citizenship, ability, race, gender and so on. Walls around the workplace do not keep out the social system of labor that has been a staple in California agriculture for centuries. However, despite the utility of intersectionality in advancing theories of work, labor markets, and precarious labor, understanding the experience of bagged salad workers also requires a framework that is attentive to the many social, cultural, and psychological crossings that individuals make subconsciously and continuously. In the next section, I articulate how a borderlands framework can help explain the spaces between farm labor and factory work that workers straddle.

Borderlands Analysis

> Teresa opened her front door a few minutes after we completed our third (recorded) interview. She notified the children she was babysitting that their mother had arrived. Teresa gathered the children's belongings shortly after greeting her neighbor from the apartment complex, Yolanda, a farm worker who had just finished her workday. Teresa asked Yolanda how the day went, to which Yolanda responded, "you already know." After closing the door, Teresa turned to me saying, "Pa que veas, esas si son chingas. [See, that's hard labor for you.]" Now it was Teresa's turn to get ready for work at Miracle Vegetable.

This scene took place a few months before I worked with Teresa Mendoza at Miracle Vegetable Company. She, like all other interviewees, would juxtapose their situation in the factory with the struggles of farmworkers. In this case, Teresa may be a former farmworker, but she lives in an apartment complex surrounded by farm working men and women – one of which trusts her enough to take care of her children. The scene

illustrates why precarious stability in bagged salad factories is intrinsically attached to farm labor. It is not that bagged salad workers cannot forget the field: the real issue is that they never left the field. *El fil*, the name that the Mexican community in the Salinas Valley gave to "the field," continues to literally surround their every move.

It is this borderland between *el fil* and *la fabrica* that feeds into precarious stability. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987; 2005) introduced borderlands framework as an attempt to understand "the mestiza consciousness." Mestizas are women that are part European and part indigenous. While the term mestiza applies to all women in Latin America that meet this characterization, Anzaldúa was refereeing specifically to mestizas of Mexican descent. According to her, mestizas cross more than the physical and political border between the U.S. and Mexico: they also cross cultural, religious, sexual, and other types of social borders. For example, a mestiza would not abandon her family and culture even if she disagreed with the norms of patriarchy that permeant throughout the community. The mestiza instead learns how two straddle both worlds, including various cultures, multiple languages, competing psyches and contradictions. Yet, Anzaldúa also writes, "if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (1987: 44). Bagged salad workers – being former farm laborers, current industrial workers, and in continuous interaction with farmworkers – are also making their own culture by bringing together different worlds.

Some social science research of Mexicans working in factories follows this

framework even if not in direct conversation with borderlands theory. Zavella (1987) demonstrates that Mexican and Chicano women construct meanings about their families and jobs based on the structural constraints that they live under. However, these same women manage to construct their own social networks, both inside and outside of work, of support to circumvent those constraints. Wright (2006) demonstrates that *what* work is classified as (e.g. skilled, unskilled, good job, bad job), is shaped by *who* the workers are outside of production. For Wright, the "disposable third-world woman" myth is utilized by managerial regimes in Mexican maquiladoras to rationalize female workers as docile, unmotivated, and unskilled. The myth gives global capital the power to offer these women a factory job out of benevolence. In reality, these women are independent agents laboring in skillful tasks. Their labor can only be rationalized as unskilled, and, consequently, converted into low-waged work, because the myth of the "disposable third-world woman" permeates managerial strategies and policies. There are also hierarchies of masculinity within these factories, as Mexican men are positioned in supervisory roles on the shop floor while upper management is composed of European men. With a transnational approach, Bank-Munoz (2008) demonstrates that gender roles in a labor process are based on localized social constructs rather than actual job tasks. Despite virtually identical factories in California and Mexico, the difference in gendered jobs at each plant can be explained by the availability of politically vulnerable populations in each location: undocumented immigrant men in California and migrant women in Mexico. Such studies demonstrate that we need to look at working populations as heterogeneous

compositions, even in the presence of an overarching status, i.e. ethnicity or nationality.

While a borderlands framework might seem foreign for the sociology of work, there has been sociological research on boundaries, which Lamont and Virag (2002) consider to be the "close cousin" of borders. Their survey of boundaries' research led them to conclude that there needs to be particular attention paid to the way in which symbolic and social boundaries feed of each other. For Lamont and Virag, symbolic boundaries are those based on conceptual distinctions that people make about each (e.g. fast-food workers distancing themselves from welfare recipients), while social boundaries are objective forms of social difference that result in unequal distribution of resources and opportunities (e.g. economic differences between IT professionals and fast-food workers). De Genova's (2005) theory of Mexican Chicago details how this community formed its boundaries through a transnational process. Not only do Mexicans bring boundaries with them as they move to Chicago, those boundaries are restructured around white power structures once in the United States. Even the boundaries that Mexican draws between themselves and Blacks are shaped by whiteness. While De Genova focused on a city, Ribas' (2015) study of racial boundaries between Latinos and Black emphasizes the labor process as a key space where race is reproduced. Her conceptualization of p*rismatic engagement* argues that boundaries between the two groups are quite fluid. However, regardless of the context under which those boundaries change, white structures of power shape those outcomes changes.

While it is difficult to argue against the notion that ideals of whiteness dominate our current society, and by extension social structures that produce boundaries, borderlands research, has positioned itself to question that very systems of knowledge and power that shape boundaries. Mignolo's (2000) work on *border thinking* was influential in pushing a framework that does not rely on hegemonic ways of thinking. One of his arguments is that academics should approach research from the perspective of marginalized. Following this line of thinking, Giroux explained that,

> For me, the concept of a border provides a continuing and crucial referent for understanding the co-mingling – sometimes clash – of multiple cultures, languages, literacies, histories, sexualities, and identities. Thinking in terms of borders allows one to critically engage the struggle over those territories, spaces, and contact zones when power operates to either expand or shrink the distance and connectedness among individuals, groups, and places (2005: 2).

Giroux is describing border pedagogy, which is used by educators to incorporate the diversity of students rather than teach them from a positon of established power structures. Borders and borderlands frameworks decenter, re-territorialize, and reformulate knowledge and power by not allowing one culture to dominate another. That is one idea that a boundaries framework does not necessarily address, as it focuses more on how communities distinguish individuals between insiders and outsiders.

Additionally, a borderlands framework is also more suited for the era of globalization and neoliberalism, where increased migration and employment insecurities constantly rearrange the borders that people cross. As argued by Mezzara

and Nielson (2013) in their call to treat borders as an analytical method, we need to "present the objects of knowledge as already constituted and investigate instead the processes by which these objects are constituted" (17). This is necessary because, according to the Mezzara and Nielson, the current moment has led to a multiplication of labor, as opposed to a division of labor, in which we have witness an "intensification of labor processes and the tendency for work to colonize the time of life" (2013: 21). That is one of the fundamental reasons why I also look beyond the shop-floor and employment relations to access precarious stability as lived by bagged salad workers.

Borderlands framework is ultimately better suited for this this study on bagged salad workers because of their social position in the Salinas Valley. Bagged salad workers are marginalized in one world, where they are the Mexican "other" in terms of union workers and U.S. residents, but they are also the "other" in a different world by being legal residents and industrial workers within a farm working Mexican community. Their version of precarious stability is, therefore, not simply about their wage labor, workplace or employment relations. They are "precarious" due to a combination of their labor and social position in the larger society. However, they also exemplify "stability" due their labor and social position within a smaller, localized society. Unpacking that comingling and/or clash of two worlds is the focus on this dissertation.

RESEARCH METHODS: THE EXTENDED CASE METHOD

Data for this research was collected through qualitative research methods between the Summer of 2011 and the Fall of 2016. Since my aim was to examine both precarity and stability as a borderlands experience, it would have been difficult to establish rigorous measurements and variables that are the backbone for quantitative analyses. A thorough academic understanding of borderlands depends on personal interaction with laborers because of the need to understand the context of what is being said or happening. As a lifelong resident of the Salinas Valley, being entrenched with the population under study also made me realize that a certain comfort level (or rapport) was necessary in order for data to be sound. That is primarily due to the suspicion that people have towards individuals asking about sensitive information. While this is true of all populations, farm working communities are particularly nervous and reticent because of their precarious situation as laborers and migrants.

There were four main phases of the research when I collected data. The first phase took place from in 2011 when I contacted bagged salad workers through snowball sampling. I interviewed about 20, but only 12 agreed to have their interview recorded. These interviews were exploratory, asking mostly about their day-to-day routine and personal background. At this point I realized that the bagged salad workforce consisted of (primarily) former farmworkers. For the second research phase, I conducted an additional 30 interviews in Fall 2015 and Winter 2016. I used interview guides with open-ended questions asking about their migration history,

transition from undocumented to legal status, and labor market experiences. Eight of these interviewees were among the 12 participants from 2011. The third phase began when I, through a staffing agency, landed a job in the shipping department at Miracle Vegetable during the Summer of 2015. I remained at Miracle Vegetable for 3 months (April to July), though I was never employed by them as I remained a temp worker throughout the ethnography. To my knowledge, only people that I had previously interviewed knew that I was a grad student researcher. When I encountered interviewees at work, we would never bring up my role unless we were alone or with *gente de confiansa* [the name we came up for interviewees connected by my snowball sampling]. When non-confidants were present, we would switch the conversation or use coded language that only we understood. I revealed my research intensions to a few coworkers after my ethnography ended, and conducted another 10 follow up interviews – six repeats from the earlier 30 and 12. I have in fact been in regular contact with the six individuals that participated in the study in 2011, 2014, and 2016. I also interviewed workers from other unionized bagged salad companies, but I ultimately focused only on workers at Miracle Vegetable because the experiences across factories were similar and because it was the only factory that I worked at. I worked in the shipping department, which was directly in front of the production lines. One of my job duties was to walk all the way down the production floor each hour to get an update on the schedule. As the day's production came to an end, I was also able to walk around the factory and make observations.

During my workplace ethnography, I wrote fields each day, which I typed

immediately after getting home. Miracle Vegetable operates its factory in the Salinas Valley six days per week, but I also kept notes for my day off (which was always Sunday). I had a notebook with notes related to my job responsibilities, however, I did not add research notes there due to concerns over privacy. Instead, I wrote notes on napkins during break or lunch, on my phone's Memo app, and on pallet stickers that I sometimes used to tag product. As I detail in later chapters, the erratic workday schedule meant that I sometimes had to type my field notes at 6 a.m. after a 12-hour workday. This was especially difficult during the first three weeks, when my body was getting accustomed to 34° temperatures and a fast-paced work environment. I was literally in my room with the chills even a few hours after my shift had ended.

There were also ethical dilemmas that I dealt with before, after, and during the workplace ethnography. Mainly, I had a hard time with this being a covert ethnography. It is one thing to write a research prospectus where you rationalize your actions beforehand, but it is another thing when you must look at people that hire you, work with you, and treat you with respect. Also, at times I wondered if I took a job opportunity from someone that was in dire need. I would think to myself, what if this job would have prevented someone from being homeless, from going hungry, and so on? Eventually I found out that the company had posted the job for over three months, and I was the first person to accept it both from within and outside the company. But, I was also hired to replace a worker that was moving onto a higher paying position within the department. When I return to my academic life, I thought, this coworker will come back to the position until they find another replacement. In essence, I was

adding to this worker's precariousness. As it turned out, the worker that I was replacing did not like the new job, so the person took advantage of a policy that allows individuals to return to a position within 90 days. This meant that I was basically there so the worker could explore whether the new opportunity was the right move. After the coworker announced that they were returning to the job, supervisors were ready to offer me a full-time job and move me into the position being vacated by the worker. However, by that time I notified them that I was leaving. A confidant later told me that it normally takes longer than 3 months for a temp worker to get a job offer, but that crew leaders were telling supervisors that I was one of the hardest workers they had ever encountered, so they were willing to offer me the position rather quickly. I could not remain at the job any longer because I would have been required to fill out an application with the company. At that point, I would have to fully disclose my education and reasons for working at the factory. I ended up giving the company about a 4-week notice. I then discussed this issue with a confidant during one of my final days at the factory. She thought I had been more than generous regardless of my research intentions. "Do you think they'd give any of us a 4-week notice if they wanted to get rid of us," was the rhetorical question she posed when told her I felt bad for doing this.

Another dilemma, which directly affects all writings that will result from this research, relates to the events or information that I am comfortable sharing. At any workplace, all of us overhear conversations. We are not intruding on people's privacy, but we also cannot help but hear public conversations. I have questions about the

ethics of documenting conversations that I was not directly involved in. For example, I would always overhear things from people in the locker room while I was putting on my safety equipment. The people in the locker room could be talking about a supervisor, another coworker, family, and so on, but they were not including me in the conversation. Or when people sat next to me in the dining hall but only conversed among themselves. For those type of situations, I leave any personal stories out of this writing, but I do include things that were common knowledge or collectively discussed in the factory, like opinions over the union, temp workers taking hours from full-time employees, or the treatment of the company towards workers. I am more open about conversations that I was personally involved in, especially with people that knew or came to know about my research.

In terms of my interviews, I promised confidentiality and anonymity, so only pseudonyms are used in this report. Because of that confidentiality, not all my close co-workers were made aware about my research. My concern is that word would eventually reach supervisors at Miracle Vegetable as more people become aware. Indeed, interviewees even recalled a meeting that occurred in 2015 where they were told not to speak to people about work. Nevertheless, most interviews were conducted in the home of the worker, a few in public places, and some over the phone if the logistics could not be worked out for personal meeting. I hired two undergraduate students to help with transcriptions. I listened to each interview multiple times as well. Most of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, but all quotes that I use are translated to English. To protect the workers, I also do not state the exact location of

the factory or the labor union that represents workers at Miracle Vegetable, although it is common knowledge that only the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Teamsters represent bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley.

Additionally, I met with labor union representatives and people knowledgeable about the industry. These interviews were not recorded, but the individuals knew my intentions. I asked labor union representatives if they could help me secure interviews, which they agreed to. However, I was cognizant that any interview contact passed to me by union leadership would likely have positive things to say about the organization. I also joined bagged salad workers at union meetings – including meetings that took place as the 2015 collective bargaining agreement was being negotiated. This CBA passed while I was still conducting my workplace ethnography. I also talked with two HR employees. They provided behind the scenes information about the hiring process and their interactions with temporary staffing agencies.

I would encounter, and continue to encounter, bagged salad workers in public spaces. In fact, at least a dozen bagged salad workers make their home in the same Salinas Valley neighborhood where I stayed. I knew some before this study, but I did not become friends with any of them until the time of the research. There were times when they would pass me information as I walked around the neighborhood, pumped gas at a local convenience store, or ran into them at the post office. I tried to keep my encounters with them as professional as possible. My rule of thumb was that I would not do something outside of normal character to bond with them (as a technique that

would benefit my research). For example, I declined drinking invitations because drinking at a bar is not something that I normally do. I did attend a wedding, two baptisms, and a quinceañera, but I was invited by friends or relatives that happened to be bagged salad workers. Attending those events under those specific circumstances is something that I would normally agree to regardless of my research. I also ended up helping the daughter of one interviewee with college applications, I gave rides after interviews when people asked (like a ride to the grocery store or to pick up their own car from the repair shop), I briefly babysat for an interviewee as she made quick run to a store (her grandson would have cried his way to a toy or candy if she took him), read and translated mail that was written in English for interviewees, and so on.

The insider-outside dynamic was clearly present in this ethnographic research of the community. At times I reflected on feeling more like an outsider at the university even though I have spent the last 12 years in academia. Conversely, many times I felt like a true member of this community even though I have not worked in a factory for over 10 years or interacted much with the local population since I started my academic career. For example, one of the benefits of working in the shipping department at Miracle Vegetable was that I could play music (especially late night). On these occasions, I did not have to search for music that I and my coworkers liked. I just connected my phone to the computer and played music from my own playlists. People walking in and out of the office already knew the songs and would sometimes share stories about the artist, hearing the songs on the radio as children, etc. The reception of the community made me an insider more so than being a lifelong resident

of the Salinas Valley.

This type of reflexivity and entrenchment with the community are components of the extended case method. In fact, the character of the ethnographic research described above compels me to employ the extended case method for this study. The extended case method is designed to focus on the context of everyday life. In turn, individuals' everyday actions help explain the structural and socio-historical forces that influences those actions (Burawoy 2009). Because the extended case method is designed to focus on difficult to measure actions and interactions, it is ultimately an ethnographic and qualitative methodology. The extended case method is also germane for this research when one considers that social scientists have already established an extensive body of knowledge, across several decades, exploring Salinas Valley lettuce (Glass 1966 & 1968; Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Thomas 1985). Thus, my research is perfectly set up to follow to explore social transformations across time and space, which is one of the key organizing principles of the extended case method.

Because of that extensive body of research on Salinas Valley lettuce, it is beneficial to conduct an ethnographic revisit as part of the extended case method. While I revisit all social science studies on Salinas Valley lettuce, I interact heavily with Thomas (1985) since was the only researcher to conduct an ethnography, a participant observation ethnography of Miracle Vegetable Company, and focus on the social organization of work and labor relations. I, in fact, borrow the pseudonym of Miracle Vegetable Company from Thomas for those reasons. Thomas researched

labor in Salinas Valley lettuce for his dissertation, which was then published as a book, titled *Citizenship, Gender & Work: Social Organization of Industrial Agriculture*. Because he has since left academia, I was unable to speak with Thomas directly, but his dissertation chair, Bill Friedland, has guided my work, answered my questions, provided original and unpublished data on their research.

The ethnographic revisit is necessary for this project since contemporary bagged salad factories can only be understood by understanding the past. As Burawoy writes in regards to the focused revisit, "an ethnographer undertakes participant observation, that is, studying others in their space and time, with a view to comparing his or her site with the same one studied at an earlier point in time, whether by this ethnographer or someone else" (2009: 75). I argue that the origins for precarious stability in bagged salad factories began with lettuce fields years ago. As stated by Friedland, Barton and Thomas, "The processing of lettuce in the form of shredding is still not very significant, but represents a 'growth sector' of the industry and, in addition, is one that is particularly appropriate and accommodative to mechanized harvesting" (1981: 31). In sum, the ethnographic revisit enhances this research because it allows me to extend bagged salad workers' experiences with social inequality, precarious labor, and labor stability into the past and the field.

Burawoy (2009) articulates four extensions of the extended case method that can be developed – though not required – through an ethnographic revisit. Each extension helps illuminate social transformations about the research. First, the extension of researcher into the lives of participants being studied. This extension

explains the ethnographic present through the researcher's embeddedness with a community. As describe above, I have been embedded with the community, though not always as a researcher, for much of my life. Second, the extension of observations over time and space. Here the focus is on how things change and the reasons for that change. This study took place across five years, but the real value of this extension is the opportunity to revisit previous research. In that sense, this study convers over half a century of transformations. Third, the extension of micro-processes to macro forces. This extension highlights the interaction between the micro and the macro, and how they reinforce/reproduce each other. For this extension, I rely on my attentiveness to the everyday life, then connect that those experiences to structural forces. Lastly, the extension of theory. Burawoy argues that the extension of theory is the most important extension since theory explains society, and understanding the nuances of society strengthens theory. I extend knowledge about precarious labor in the current moment by focusing on how stability is crucial for understanding precarity.

Burawoy (2009) details four types of revisits, two of which are useful for this research: the heuristic and archeological. The heuristic revisit utilizes a past study to frame the present-day investigation. Thomas (1985) investigated why lettuce harvesting workers, unlike blue-collar workers of the time, were unable to convert their skills and productivity into true economic security. Thus, Thomas was concerned with the reproduction of inequalities through work. My study is ultimately about the ways in which stability and precarity reinforce each other to reproduce social inequalities. By focusing on the same company, Miracle Vegetable, that is still

located in the same geographic area, the Salinas Valley, I can compare the same issues that Thomas addressed: gender, unionization, and labor control. His research allows me to connect two different periods in time with changes between farms and the factory. An archeological revisit will help explain the subjective experiences of precarity and stability by focusing on why bagged salad workers consider their job to be both precarious and stable. As Burawoy writes, "If the heuristic revisit moves forward in time, from the earlier study to the later one that it frames, the archeological revisit moves backward in time to excavate the historical terrain that gives rise or meaning to the ethnographic present" (2009: 131). The archeological a revisit will unpack how a background in farm labor frames present-day experiences of bagged salad workers. Moving back and forth between time periods is quite necessary to understand the socio-historical formation of precarious stability in bagged salad.

MAP OF DISSERTATION

There are four empirical chapters that follow. Each chapter adds a layer to my theorization of precarious stability. The chapters also help answer my research questions. With bagged salad workers as a case study: How can a job be both precarious and stable? Why are workers unable to convert their social gains of unionization, industrialization, and legalization into economic security? Throughout this dissertation, I weave interviews and ethnographic data together, focus on both inside and outside the workplace, and link the past with the present to explain how precarious labor and labor stability reinforce each other and to unpack how social

inequalities are reproduced.

An ethnographic revisit of the heuristic kind shapes chapter two. I engage past research on Salinas Valley lettuce, especially Thomas (1985), and provide a background about the rise of bagged salad. I compare labor processes between bagged salad in contemporary factories and lettuce harvesting in Salinas Valley fields during the 1980s. I emphasize gender relations, labor control, and unionization between the two sites and time periods. One goal of this chapter is to highlight how lettuce fields in the past set up the foundation for precarious stability the present.

The next two chapters explore the borderlands between stability and precarity in bagged salad factories by linking the past with the present. Chapter three goes back in time, as an archeological revisit, to trace the migration history, memories of farm work, and the transition into bagged salad that individuals made. This chapter is a labor market analysis that demonstrates how individuals *make* labor stability and precarious labor tangible by reflecting on their time as undocumented migrant farm workers.

Chapter focuses on the everyday character of precarious stability that workers contend with. The chapter highlights how living in the Salinas Valley makes it impossible to forget *el fil*, which is the name given to "the fields" by local residents. Once the comparison with *el fil* is eliminated analytically, the precarity of their labor becomes palpable. In addition to precarious stability in the workplace, chapter four looks at the home/family life of research participants. It analyzes the borderlands between wage-labor relations and non-work life.

Chapter five addresses the cultural and ethnic community that bagged salad workers have established. I focus on how events in the company break room and work-related activities on the shop-floor help foster a sense of community among workers at Miracle Vegetable. I argue that ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each by examining protest events that occurred while I conducted my workplace ethnography. Ethnic solidarity, or the ability to express Mexican ethnicity, not only reinforces labor solidarity, but it is also one of the reasons why the job is rationalized as stable employment.

The concluding chapter reviews the main arguments and positions this research with literature on precarious labor and the sociology of work. It also addresses shortcomings with this study that could be addressed with future research, such as the role of temporary staffing agencies and Mexican American workers (though both topics are loosely addressed in this project).

Chapter 2: Revisiting Lettuce

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the rise of bagged salad through an ethnographic revisit of the Salinas Valley's lettuce industry. The purpose of this revisit is to demonstrate that precarious stability is an extension of the labor practices, social history, and power relations that workers, unions, and agribusiness firms cultivated on Salinas Valley lettuce farms long before bagged salad factories were built. Ideas from various published accounts on Salinas Valley lettuce are weaved throughout this revisit (Glass 1966 & 1968; Friedland, Barton, and Thomas 1981), but I emphasize Robert Thomas' (1985) *Citizenship, Gender, & Work*. Data for his study was collected in the late 1970s and early 80s. The book itself was released approximately one decade before bagged salad factories began their operations in the mid-1990s[8].

Unlike other published accounts on Salinas Valley lettuce, which are primarily concerned with the organization of production or political economy, Thomas (1985) stands out for his depth and breadth on the topics of labor, gender, and citizenship. His central research puzzle focused on why lettuce harvesting workers earned lower wages and held lower social statuses in comparison to other blue-collar laborers who exhibited similar skills. At the time of his study, literature in the sociology of work was primarily concerned with the reproduction of inequalities

[8] Miracle Vegetable, a pseudonym that I borrow from Thomas (1985) since it is the same company that he researched, opened its bagged salad factory in the Salinas Valley in 1994. This was not the first factory built, but Miracle Vegetable became the largest bagged salad producer immediately after the factory opened.

through the labor process. As Thomas stated, "theories of labor market segmentation and labor process organization often fail to account for historically persistent inequalities by race, gender, and citizenship precisely because they rely upon a strict economic determination of social and political inequality" (1985: 9). In contrast, Thomas concluded that labor processes and labor markets, on one side, and social and political institutions, on the other side, *structure one another*. In his case study, lettuce harvesting workers were positioned along the labor process and wage hierarchy based on ascribed statuses of gender, race, and citizenship, and structural factors such as immigration laws and political control of labor supply. "In essence," wrote Thomas, "citizenship and gender inequalities are used to construct an abundant supply of labor, to increase the stability of the work force, and to enhance managerial control over work organization and wages" (1985: 114). The passage indicates that both precarity and stability were already characteristics of lettuce harvesting labor in the 1980s, well before sociological research began to focus on precarious labor. Lettuce workers' lives also contained a degree of stability since, relative to the rest of agriculture, lettuce harvesting jobs were better-paying, work-crews remained together longer, and unionization was stronger among lettuce workers than other farm working groups.

This ethnographic revisit advances my overall argument, that precarity and stability reinforce each other, by unpacking the origins of precarious stability at Miracle Vegetable. I argue that bagged salad factories were built atop the social foundation of lettuce farms in the Salinas Valley and suggest that the shared history

between workers and the company helps make precarious stability possible. The main difference is that Thomas (1985) examined lettuce field and I investigate bagged salad factories. However, I treat bagged salad as an extension of lettuce harvesting by focusing on the social system of labor that engulfs both workplaces.

Focusing on the social system of labor in lettuce harvesting highlights the foundational structures of *precarious stability* in contemporary bagged salad factories. Part one of the chapter offers a brief overview of Monterey County's agricultural economy and the dominance of lettuce production within it. I focus on factors that make the Salinas Valley, which is the key agricultural hub in Monterey County, the top location in the world for lettuce production. I also review how a consumer-driven market organizes bagged salad and cover the processes and conditions required for bagged salad manufacturing. Part two reviews literature on Salinas Valley lettuce. I underscore the labor relations of lettuce harvesting that are today relevant for bagged salad processing. The topics that I cover are gender, labor control, and unionization. Part three introduces bagged salad workers. I first focus on the two most visible gendered jobs at Miracle Vegetable: packers and stackers. Like Thomas, I demonstrate how gender relations add to their precarity. My analysis then shifts to labor control by focusing on *mayordomos* [crew leaders]. I show how mayordomos' labor control ability in bagged salad has been reconfigured from the fields, such as losing their hiring authority but maintaining their disciplinary status, and how the position itself is more precarious in bagged salad. Despite changes to the occupation, mayordomo/as remain key figures in the formation of precarious stability. My final

analysis of the chapter centers on unionization. I argue that, much like the United Farm Workers (UFW) in the fields, industrial labor unions are unable break away from long-standing power imbalances between workers and employers. I compare the benefits and drawbacks of unionization between bagged salad factories in the contemporary moment and lettuce farms in the 1980s. This comparison sheds light on the reason why the unionization of bagged salad workers has been unable to eradicate years of exploitation. Additionally, I spotlight how the shadow of the UFW looms over Miracle Vegetable even as the company and workers are not members of that organization.

MONTEREY COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Salinas Valley and Lettuce

Agriculture is the largest economic sector in Monterey County – with the Salinas Valley being at the forefront of the local economy. A recent report highlights that 18.5 percent of total economic output in the county comes from agriculture (Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner 2014). Through direct output ($5.7 billion) and multiplier effects ($2.4 billion), agriculture contributes $8.1 billion to the local economy. Agriculture also provides 23.7 percent of all jobs in the county, or approximately 56,000 total jobs. An additional 18,000 jobs in the county can also be credited to indirect and induced spending associated with agriculture. An earlier breakdown of similar findings reveal that Salinas Valley agriculture is itself responsible for 70 percent of that economic output and 79 percent of those

agricultural jobs in Monterey Country (Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner 2012).

Lettuce production is the most dominate segment within Monterey County and Salinas Valley agriculture[9]. For example, 90 percent of bagged salad items sold in the United States are produced in the Salinas Valley. In addition, the Salinas Valley supplies 70-80 percent of all lettuce heads sold in the United States (Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce 2014). Growing conditions in Monterey County and, in particular, the Salinas Valley, have in fact made California the leading lettuce producing state since at least 1950 (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2010). Local climate is one reason why Monterey County is the premier location for the mass production of bagged salad since lettuce grows best in regions where daytime temperatures average between 63º-83º. Optimal soil and water supply infrastructure further help make Monterey County the most profitable location for lettuce production (UC Vegetable Research and Information Center 2010a; 2010b). In 2010, strawberries were Monterey County's most profitable crop ($751 billion), however, leaf lettuce ($724 billion) and iceberg lettuce ($512 billion) ranked second and third (Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner 2010). Iceberg lettuce has ranked in the third sport since 2010, but leaf was the number one crop in 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2015, and number two in 2013. Spinach, which is a product that is also packaged by

[9] For example, head (iceberg) and leaf lettuce are usually among the top three crops, along with strawberries, in the Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's annual crop value report.

bagged salad companies, usually ranks in the top 10 as well[10].

The dominance of lettuce in an agricultural economy highlights why the Salinas Valley, as a strategic location, matters for bagged salad production. For food processors, the choice of plant location is directly linked to the ability to receive raw materials in the shortest possible time (Turatti 2011). In the era of globalization, it is rather common for companies to pit locations against each other as they seek the cheapest places for production. However, bagged salad firms cannot manipulate nature to the point where they can relocate freely and maintain current levels of profitability.

Additionally, recent food borne illnesses related to leafy greens have only strengthened the Salinas Valley's value to the industry. In the mid1990s when bagged salad first became a commodity, companies shut down their Salinas Valley facilities from November to March. During those months, factories in Yuma, Arizona were responsible for bagged salad production. The reason for the move – in which all production lines from Salinas Valley factories were disassembled and shipped on trucks to be reassembled in Yuma – was the supply of lettuce coming from Arizona during the winter months. However, (partly) because of foodborne illnesses originating with bagged salad products, which were covered in national news (Stuart 2010), companies like Miracle Vegetable switched from cutting lettuce with stainless steel knives to water pressure cutters. However, recalibrating water pressure cutters proved difficult once production lines were moved, so Miracle Vegetable now

[10] See http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/agricultural-commissioner/forms-publications/crop-reports-economic-contributions#ag.

operates their local facility year-round. In fact, all companies with facilities in the Salinas Valley now remain in the area throughout the year. According to sources, it was simply cheaper to keep production in the Salinas Valley year-round.

The processing of leafy greens into products like bagged salad is now one of the most profitable value-added sectors of Salinas Valley agribusiness. Estimates suggest that the processing of leafy green accounts for almost $1 billion of the $8 billion in county agricultural outputs (Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's Office 2012; 2014). Additionally, bagged salad products are being purchased by approximately 75 percent of households in the U.S. (Stuart 2010) and retail sales for packaged produce and salads is expected to rise from $5.6 billion in 2013 to $7 billion in 2018 (Packaged Facts 2014). While there is much price fluctuation due to supply and demand cycles of agriculture, growers sell harvested lettuce at $0.25/lb. to salad processors, yet, the retail price of bagged salad is usually around $3/lb. (Stuart 2010).

The Bagged Salad Industry

While the bagged salad industry is structured around consolidation and vertical integration of firms, production and transportation, and organized around a mass-production system where flexible and just-in-time manufacturing models are the norm (Friedland 1994), the idea for the conventional and individualized salad bags of today originated with organic salad mixes in Northern California cuisine circles. Earthbound Farms first began selling washed, spun dried, and re-sealable salad mixes

to supermarkets in the late 1980s. Social justice movements of the 1960s influenced early salad processer like Earthbound Farms. Their business model and mission was organized by the principles of sustainable agriculture and food justice. Transnational food conglomerates, however, quickly noticed the profitability of processed salad (Guthman 2003). While Earthbound was operating a small-scale salad processing business and focused on local retail sales, agribusiness firms, led by companies like Miracle Vegetable, were processing lettuce in the fields to supply hotels, restaurants, catering services, and cafeterias with ready-to-eat shredded lettuce (Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Guthman 2003; Rojas-Grau, Garner and Martin-Belloso 2011).

Processed/shredded lettuce was originally not as profitable as ground-packed or wrapped lettuce (both commodities are described below), but that changed when the principles of agribusiness – large-scale production requiring (low-waged) mass labor – were applied to salad processing. By 2001, bagged salad production required a capital investment of $20 million dollars (Glaser, Thompson and Handy 2001). In 2007, the United Fresh Produce Association found that bagged salad represented the largest portion of fresh-cut produce sales in the U.S. by bringing in a total $2.7 billion. Dole and Fresh Express, two firms with bagged salad facilities in the Salinas Valley, accounted for 48 percent and 42 percent of fresh-cut vegetable sales respectively as recently as 2010 (Rojas-Grau, Garner and Martin-Belloso 2011). General trends toward healthier eating and the greater inclusion of women in the workforce are reasons for bagged salad's popularity (Oms-Oliu and Soliva-Fortuny 2011). The reduction of household labor is in fact one of the key selling points for bagged salad,

as companies attempt to capitalize on the upsurge of working women and/or mothers with have less time for meal preparation (Rojas-Grau, Garner and Martin-Belloso 2011).

The market economy for bagged salad is very much organized around daily production, sales, and consumption. While lettuce farms supply lettuce to processing facilities through daily sales, bagged salad companies negotiate yearly contractual arrangements with supermarkets and retailers (Glaser, Thompson and Handy 2001). Despite the market dominance of a few bagged salad companies, the industry is a consumer-driven market. Retailers and supermarkets have pressured bagged salad companies into paying fees for shelf space, providing automatic replenishment services, using returnable containers, and other specialized services. One bagged salad firm, beginning in 1997 and to the disappointment of other companies, decided it could expand its market share by paying slotting fees to corporate and regional headquarters of supermarket chains. Despite these accommodations, supermarkets and retailers have not demonstrated much loyalty to bagged salad firms. In fact, competition is intense among branded salad firms during negotiations with supermarkets and retailers, and, due to retail consolidation, the loss of a single contract represents substantial lost revenue for the bagged salad company (Glaser, Thompson and Handy 2001). For example, bagged salad companies in the Salinas Valley have (temporarily) eliminated production shifts, reduced the workweek from six to five days, cut overtime hours, and sold facilities used to store bagged salad products after losing contracts with key buyers. These details suggest that instability

is built into the industry.

The Bagged Salad Production Process

The bagged salad production process (and vegetable/fruit processing in general), is organized around the 3-C's principle: "Keep Clean, Cold and avoid Cross-contamination" (Turatti 2011). Post-harvest handling of lettuce requires that the plant be cooled immediately to 34° degrees, where it should remain constantly until it is sold. Lettuce is chilled to that temperature through vacuum cooling (UC Vegetable and Research Information Center 2010a: 2010b). In bagged salad processing facilities, temperatures can fluctuate slightly, but as a general rule, temperatures remain close to 34° with 98 percent humidity because lettuce and other harvested produce loses water rapidly if these conditions are not met (Montero-Calderon and Cerdas-Aray 2011).

When bagged salad factories first opened, workers removed unwanted leaves and cores from lettuce plants inside the factory. Removal of waste (unwanted parts of the plant) was a labor-intensive process that relied on dozens of workers (Turatti 2011). However, the task of removing waste from lettuce plants was assigned to lettuce workers in the fields a few years ago. As such, lettuce now arrives to the shop-floor ready to be processed. Delegating the removal of waste to field workers eliminated about 100 jobs at Miracle Vegetable. This highlights how companies view the production of bagged salad as one labor process going from harvesting to processing, even as workers distinguish their labor between the fields and the factory.

Washing, which follows waste removal, is the most important step for food safety. This process removes harmful microorganisms and the conditions that allow them to grow (Gil, Allende and Selma 2011). Bagged salad processors rely heavily on chlorine-based washing treatments to sanitize their products. Some chlorine combinations are known for having "beneficial effects on the shelf life and quality of lettuce salads, as well as on the water used for rinsing and cleaning the lettuce" (Gil, Allende and Selma 2011: 222). After washing, produce is moved by vibrating conveyors to dryers. After lettuce is spun-dried, the product moves to mixing and weighing. From there the salad mix is bagged, packaged in boxes, and palletized on the shop-floor. Following these steps, and keeping the product consistently refrigerated throughout the supply chain, gives bagged salad approximately 15 to 17 days of shelf life at grocery stores and retailers (Stuart 2010). While contracts have decreased in recent years, Miracle Vegetable Company is still one of the premier bagged salad companies in the United States.

As far as workers in the factory, Miracle Vegetable is the second largest bagged salad employer in the Salinas Valley. The company employed approximately 800 workers as of 2015. All full-time employees are members of the Teamsters union, but between 50-75 temporary workers are also on assignment at the factory at any given moment. Across all unionized bagged salad companies in the Salinas area, the terms of temporary labor are negotiated with unions, but companies have found ways to circumvent those terms. For instance, temporary workers at Miracle Vegetable are supposed to be hired after a certain amount in a specific department and satisfactory

performance. The union can insert language covering "the amount of time" in the collective bargaining agreement, but the company defines "satisfactory performance" on a case-by-case basis. While I was at the company, I encountered people working through staffing agencies that had been assigned to the factory for 9 months or more. They were denied job offers because the company moved them from department to department to break their time cycles. Moving around departments also make it more unlikely that a worker's performance is recognized by supervisors. Worker hierarchies – where the interests of one set of workers are pitted against the interests of others – have been common in agriculture throughout the years. Hierarchies in factories and fields, and between the two locations, are important for precarious stability because they are borderlands constructed by workers and employers alike.

All people going to Miracle Vegetable's factory cross agricultural fields to reach the facility. In the Salinas Valley, all bagged salad workers encounter at least one security guard before entering the workplace. In some factories, the guard is position at the parking lot entrance. Once the guard clears them for entrance, workers usually store their lunch in the dining room and put on all the necessary work equipment – including ear plugs, hairnets, gloves, face mask, etc. Most workers arrive dressed in warm clothing, but a few choose to change into their work clothes in the locker rooms. Workers are required to clock in 7-8 minutes before the start of their shift. They use those seven minutes to warm up with stretching exercises. They are supposed to get those seven minutes back as the end of the work shift, but several interviewees complained that individual mayordomos sometimes do not allow that.

Finally, workers sanitize their glovers and work shoes before entering getting to their posts on the shop-floor.

The convoluted nature of bagged salad processing, which consists of lettuce shredding, chemical application, washing, mixing, drying, and bagging, necessitates labor tasks in industrial factories, where the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and labor unions await. (Though, as describe earlier, companies have been able to move certain tasks from factories to fields.) This represents a key distinction from previous eras, when lettuce firms transferred tasks from unionized factories to nonunion fields (Glass 1966; Mitchell 2012). Union officials that I spoke with estimate that 80 percent of the approximately 8,000 bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley are unionized. Yet, even as companies deal with the NLRA and unionization, workers contend with the socio-historical dominance of agribusiness. In the next section, I review the key elements of that social-historical foundation by revisiting research on Salinas Valley lettuce.

REVISITING SALINAS VALLEY LETTUCE

Gender in Lettuce Harvesting

In lettuce harvesting, gender and citizenship converged to produce different outcomes for men and women (Thomas 1985). Men, especially undocumented migrants, were placed in ground-pack crews as cutters and packers. Ground-pack crews packaged lettuce directly into shipping boxes immediately after harvesting. Wages for ground-pack crews were organized around piece-rates. Undocumented

migrant men, because of their political vulnerability, were willing to work at an intense, self-regulated, fast-pace because possible deportations could bring their earing to an instant halt. With possible deportation hovering above daily life, it was important for them to earn as much as possible regardless of injuries, aches, or pains. As a result, men in ground-pack crews worked at a pace that allowed them to maximize the immediate economic rewards even if that reward came at the expense of long-term health. Men in ground-pack crews were likely to be in their physical prime and developed a high degree of dexterity in their jobs. According to Friedland, Barton, Thomas (1981) and Thomas (1985), these men usually had a period of 10-18 years in which they could work in ground-pack crews. After their physical ability deteriorated, more productive men replaced them on the crew. In essence, friendship, loyalty, and commitment were only possible as long as each individual kept up with the pace of harvesting. Over the course of my research, I spoke to a few men that used to work in lettuce ground-pack crews. One interviewee remembered earning the equivalent of 80 minimum-wage hours in a single day as a cutter in ground-pack crews[11]. Research has corroborated stories like this by highlighting that there was a (brief) moment in the history of lettuce harvesting when *lechugeros* were paid higher wages than most workers in the United States (Bardacke 2011).

In contrast to men in ground-pack crews, women in lettuce harvesting were more likely to be placed in wrap-pack crews. Some women were specifically directed to wrapping jobs in these crews, where their main task was to place lettuce heads in

[11] The worker recalled making $240 per day in ground-pack crews at a time in the early 1980s when the minimum wage in California was $3.10 per hour.

individual bags that were then shipped directly to grocery stores (Friedland, Barton, and Thomas 1981; Thomas 1985). Legal residency was the main reason why some women were allocated to wrapping jobs. These women also lived year-round in the Salinas Valley. This form of stability was necessary because wrapping lettuce heads in individual bags was a task that required months of experience before workers gained the necessary dexterity required for the job. Wrappers were positioned at the end of the assembly machinery in the fields, so an inability to keep up with the pace of work would result in slowdowns or production backlogs. Women who were year-round residents of the Salinas Valley could, therefore, return season after season to their wrapping jobs after they had mastered their craft. Conversely, an undocumented status eliminated workers from wrapping jobs because of the production slowdowns that could result from their deportation. Lettuce companies benefited from this gender and citizenship setup because it eliminated the need to train new wrappers each season and because they did not have to pay a skills premium to women of color with few labor market options. As the personnel director of Miracle Vegetable told Thomas, "Stability is the most important thing. If we have to spend time training our crews every year or season, we lose money because we slow down. Its very important that the people know what they're doing and that they know how to do it the Miracle way (1985: 195).

The family life of these women also contributed to their position on the wrap-pack labor process. In addition to his ethnography, Thomas (1985) also surveyed workers in his study on Salinas Valley Lettuce. He found that women workers (N=60)

were married at a 75 percent rate, compared to 32 percent of male lettuce workers (N=22). By a percentage of 66.7 to 36.4, women were also more likely to have dependent children than male workers. Married women workers had a .62 "ratio of respondent's average income to spouse", while men had a ratio of 1.2. As Thomas indicates, "The forces that restrict the employment opportunities of women also act to stabilize that labor pool residentially. The role of wife and mother, the subordinate status of a woman's work to that of her husband, and the various family earning strategies severely limit the geographic mobility of married women" (1985: 193). For such reasons, women remained year-round in the Salinas Valley rather than migrate with the lettuce-loop – which goes to Southern California and Arizona in winter months. Thomas adds, "women's geographic stability, a product of their economic and family position, makes their labor available on a regular, seasonal basis" (1985: 201). In fact, lettuce companies preferred hiring local women in all locations along the lettuce-loop.

Wrap-crews were not restricted to women however. Only wrapping positions were feminized by work culture and hiring practices. Men in wrap-pack crews, whether undocumented or legal, were placed in cutter jobs. These men tended to be older individuals who were unable to keep pace in ground-pack crews or inexperienced *lechugeros* looking to hone their skills for a possible upgrade into the more prestigious ground-pack crews. All jobs in wrap-pack crews were paid by the hour instead of piece-rate wages, and the pace of work was controlled by machinery

on the fields instead of a self-dictated pace. The crew leader, the *mayordomo*[12], controlled the pace of that machinery.

Mayordomo Labor Control Regime

While citizenship and gender statuses allowed lettuce companies to strategically direct workers into jobs, *mayordomos* gave companies the ability to manage people in the labor process and filter them in the labor market (Thomas 1985). Mayordomos were ultimately responsible for hiring workers, training them (though this responsibility could be passed on to others), and reaching production quotas. Unless they knew the mayordomo personally, which was not uncommon since mayordomos were part of the same hometown networks as other Mexican migrants, potential lettuce workers typically needed a sponsor already on the crew to vouch for them to the mayordomo. If hired, the worker would "owe" the mayordomo. The only way to pay back the "debt" was through goodwill, loyalty, and commitment.

Mayordomos had no problem reminding workers about their "debt" during disputes or confrontations (Thomas 1985). "When I overslept on two separate occasions," wrote Thomas, "the foreman of our crew, Don Pablo, chided me for missing work and threatened to have me replaced if I did not work especially hard for lost time… the foreman [in all cases witnessed by Thomas], did not take formal punitive action but instead either reminded workers … that their actions were not so

[12] I mostly use the Spanish male pronoun when referring to crew leaders since men take the vast majority of jobs. Female crew leaders, *mayordomas,* are more common in salad factories today, but they were virtually nonexistent in lettuce fields during the 1980s.

much an infraction against the employment contract as an affront to the generosity of the foreman" (1985: 143-144). Thomas additionally found that workers rarely mentioned Miracle Vegetable when discussing their employment. Instead, they made references to the mayordomo (e.g. "I work in Don Pablo's *cuadrilla* [crew]," "I prefer working for Don Alfonso instead of Don Miguel," and so on). Mayordomos also presented themselves as being on the side of workers, rather than the company. For example, it was ultimately mayordomos that helped workers avoid detection if they were undocumented. Thomas even witnessed his work crew rally around a mayordomo that lambasted immigration officials when they raided his field. This highlights how, even as academic literature may accurately capture an authoritarian strand that mayordomos exhibit, workers themselves can accept mayordomos as members of their own communities.

One reason for this acceptance is that mayordomos, past and present, are likely to be co-ethnics. In lettuce harvesting, mayordomos were either Mexican nationals or Mexican Americans that could communicate with workers (Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Thomas 1985). Co-ethnic mayordomos were also common in agricultural work crews when their members were predominantly Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino (Ngai 2005; Garcia 2012; Thomas 1985). Utilizing co-ethnics to help manage farm working populations goes back to the original farm workers in California: Native Americans during Spanish rule of the territory. Native Americans, including the Salinan people that originally resided in the Salinas Valley, became the first farm laborers in Spanish Missions across California. The mayordomo at that time

was a Spanish solider tasked with maintaining discipline among these workers. Yet, over time, other Natives Americans – those who assimilated quicker into the norms of Europeans and Christianity – were selected to assist Spaniard mayordomos (Monroy 1996). Since this time, people in charge of agricultural production have used co-ethnics to help manage agricultural workers.

The role of mayordomos in the fields has only been strengthened by the vertical integration of food companies. Miracle Vegetable, for example, has been part of transnational food company since the 1970s (Thomas 1985). Because of language and (sometimes) literacy issues, agricultural workers are unable to navigate the bureaucratic nature of corporations. Mayordomos become that buffer between formal corporate structures and employment. In other words, mayordomos unilaterally controlled the hiring because they functioned as intermediaries between human resource departments and workers that lacked knowledge about formally applying for positions in lettuce harvesting. In addition to hiring, mayordomos were also positioned to help firms secure the control over work processes. As Thomas details, "The enigmatic character of Miracle Vegetable Co. is similar in many respects to IBM and other giant corporations which have, through one means or another, successfully avoided sustained challenges to managerial control over the work process" (1985: 137). Workers could not complain too loudly because many of them were undocumented immigrants or in precarious situations. Mayordomos could also replace them by claiming that they are being disruptive, insubordinate, unproductive, and so on.

Unions in Lettuce Harvesting

Unions, because of unintended consequences, also helped establish an avenue for labor control. During the time of Thomas' study, lettuce workers were among most unionized subsets of farm laborers across California. The UFW represented most workers in the fields, while the Teamsters represented truck drivers, mechanics, and other support workers in agribusiness. This set up continued when bagged salad factories sprouted up across the Salinas Valley in the mid1990s. All unionized bagged salad workers in the area are now either represented by the Teamsters or United Food and Commercial Workers. However, in the past, like in the present, a high degree of unionization did not necessarily make lettuce jobs less precarious (Thomas 1985). Unionization even created new paradoxes for workers to contend with. For example, it created hierarchies between workers in the same crew because farm labor contractors supplemented lettuce harvesting labor when companies were short personnel. This meant that unionized *lechugeros* could be working side-by-side with nonunion crews.

Researchers exploring divisions between agricultural workers have also underscored the importance of the Bracero Program for California. During the Bracero period, ethnic Mexican workers, including Braceros, undocumented workers, legal migrants, and citizens, combined to produce a steady supply of labor that was under the political control of agribusiness (Glass 1966; Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Thomas 1985; Mize Jr 2006; Mitchell 2012). Glass (1966) investigated

unionization in Salinas Valley lettuce fields and packing sheds during the Bracero era. The technology of vacuum cooling, where a vacuum chamber is used to rapidly cool lettuce so moisture and heat buildup are eliminated, was launched in the late 1950s. Shifting from ice-packed lettuce to vacuum cooled lettuce eliminated the need for unionized packing sheds and increased the demand for farm labor since field packing jobs were introduced. Overall, labor savings were realized because Braceros, the preferred source of labor after packing shed consolidation, were paid half the wages that unionized packing shed workers earned (Glass 1966 & 1968). At the start of World War II, White women dominated the unionized packing-shed workforce. Braceros, undocumented migrants, and legal residents of Mexican descent were the main source of lettuce field labor, though Filipinos also composed a significant segment of the lettuce labor force (Glass 1966; Ngai 2005; Mitchell 2012). The racial and class composition prevented solidarity between packing-shed and field workers. As documented by Glass (1968),

> The power of shedworkers was never used to assist the unionization of fieldworkers. While there could have been a joint approach to bargaining by shed- and fieldworkers, each group able to enhance the power of the other, the shedworkers' unions did not attempt vertical unionization. The unstructured nature of the harvestworkers' market, the continuous turnover of personnel, the ethnic distinctions between shedworkers and fieldworkers, and the presence of labor contractors were sufficient deterrents. Also, shedworkers, considering fieldworkers a noncompeting group, did not realize the importance of cooperating with them to safeguard their own self-interest (25).

In effect, shed workers were powerless once agribusiness tapped Braceros as their preferred labor source and moved packing tasks from the factory to the field.

The UFW and Teamsters battled for right to represent lettuce workers in the

ensuing decades. Fearing the more radical UFW, Miracle Vegetable signed an agreement with the Teamsters to represent their lettuce harvesting in the early 1960s. The belief was that the Teamsters could protect the company from the UFW because workers would be satisfied with unionization in general. Miracle did not anticipate that workers would instead demand representation by the UFW. By the time of Thomas's research in the late 1970s, the UFW and Teamsters had reached an agreement stipulating that the Teamsters would gradually leave lettuce harvesting, and all other farm laborers, for the UFW since it was obvious that Mexican farm laborers preferred them.

However, the Teamsters unionization of lettuce workers at Miracle Vegetable had yet to end when the company employed Thomas, so he became a member of the union as he researched the company. The union practiced what Thomas referred to as *low–profile unionism*. "After six weeks at Miracle," wrote Thomas, "I was approached by a union representative for the first and only time. The representative came because several new workers (including me) had not yet signed dues authorization forms (allowing Miracle to subtract the union initiation fees and monthly dues)" (1985: 138). Thomas is essentially arguing that the Teamsters were primarily concerned with dues paying members rather than the control of work. By contrast, the UFW was known as more than a labor union. It was a community organization that, in addition to challenging agribusiness firms over the control of work and hiring, celebrated the ethnic composition of its members and supported social justice reforms outside of the workplace.

After the rise of the UFW, agribusiness firms began utilizing undocumented labor and labor contractors in higher numbers. As argued above, those workers were also placed strategically along the labor process to yield the lowest possible wages. While UFW leadership committed plenty of mistakes along the way (Bardacke 2011; Garcia 2012), it was undocumented workers and labor contractors that prevented unionized lettuce workers from fully capitalizing on their collective labor power and created a labor supply source that defeated the rise of unionism (Thomas 1985). In Salinas Valley lettuce, this was a case of agribusiness learning from their past successes rather than a new labor control scheme. As Glass wrote decades ago, "As a result of technological changes, then, lettuce entrepreneurs were able to eliminate the shedworkers union" and "the result of the 'domination' of the farm job market of the Salinas Valley by braceros was that domestic farm laborers were working at the wage rates and employment conditions of braceros, contrary to the intent of Public Law 78 [the Bracero Program]" (1968: 26). This highlights how lettuce firms have managed to integrate technological and societal changes into their business practices. The result has been a consistently stronger position for the company vis-à-vis workers.

In contemporary bagged salad factories, companies rely on formerly undocumented farm laborers to fill their labor needs. In the next section, I argue that this population – formerly undocumented farm workers – makes bagged salad production possible. As explained above, during different points in time, Miracle Vegetable has flawlessly positioned Braceros, undocumented immigrants, legal residents, citizens, and men and women along the labor process to engender the most

optimal business-friendly outcomes. In essence, the intersection of gender, race, class, and citizenship, along with unionization and mayordomo labor control regimes, has been a staple in Salinas Valley lettuce. The next section focuses on how bagged salad factories reproduced this structure. In turn, this mix of social relations between new factories and old fields, shape the character of precarious stability that bagged salad workers contend with.

WORKERS AT MIRACLE VEGETABLE

Empacadoras

> The recruitment and job allocation process, however, is an active part of making and perpetuating women's work. Here employers intervene directly in an attempt to ensure that the same category of labor continues to show up where it is most advantageous. First, wage reductions eliminate the economic basis for men working in those jobs because they are neither sufficient to encourage migration nor high enough to support the single family paycheck. Second, women are actively recruited through a variety of networks to occupy positions on the machines. The utilization of foremen's networks and those of women crew members enables firms to perpetuate identification of gender with occupation (Thomas 1985: 198).

> When we call [temp agencies] for "general labor," they know to send us women. If we say we need "heavy labor," they'll send men…. People born in the U.S. are not good workers.… I've actually been told things like 'I'm only here because my mom says I need a job'…. People that worked in the fields are better workers, but some of the younger ones don't like working here [Miracle Vegetable] because of the hours. They want to be out on Saturday nights – (excerpts from an interview with a human resources worker in 2015).

I asked interviewees if any jobs were primarily reserved for either women or men. The jobs more likely to be associated with specific genders were women packers and male pallet stackers. Additionally, these job classifications were

consistently talked about in gendered terms, with the Spanish nouns of *empacadora* for female packers and *estacadores* for male pallet stackers. The narratives of empacadoras were at times strikingly like the descriptions of women wrappers in lettuce fields that Thomas (1985) described. Alma Santana, a packer at Miracle Vegetable, explained, "A lot of us doing the job are probably divorced or separated, and we have families to support." Alma also detailed the degree of skill required to be a packer

> Depending on the run, there may be hundreds of bags per minute. We visually inspect *el graffiti* as the bag comes rushing down the line. [*El graffiti* refers to labels on the bag that detail information such as expiration date, weight of the bag, product code, and so forth.] We then see and feel if anything is wrong with the bag, all while product keeps coming. If we can't keep up, the line gets backed up, or they have to slow down.

Camelia Mendoza, another empacadora, explained that the bag must have a "soft but firm feel" when one squeezes it. If she does not sense that exact softness with her fingers, the salad bag is (probably) defective so she removes it until it can be further inspected. She can also "see" when there is excessive oxygen or water droplets in the bag. "You can tell because the bag looks different when it's coming down the line," Camelia replied, "and we [empacadoras] usually get it right." Some empacadoras performed similar packing duties as agricultural workers. "I was actually packing broccoli for Miracle Vegetable in the fields before I came to the factory," added Alma Santana, "anybody who does that job in the fields can do it in the factory." The only empacadora in the sample that had no experience in farm labor was Yesenia Córdova. She was also one of two non-Mexicans that I encountered, as she was born in El

Salvador. Her employment background in the United States, and before Miracle Vegetable, consisted of housekeeping work. “I spent the first few months at the factory doing general labor,” explained Yesenia, “but I wanted something more stable so I became an *empacadora*. This was the only job outside of general labor that I felt I could do. Other jobs required English or seemed too heavy for me.” I asked if working in the factory was better than working as a housekeeper, to which she replied, “Yes, much better. It’s reliable work. As a house cleaner, I never knew if I’d even work.”

Seeing the speed of the assembly line manufacturing helps one appreciate the proficiency required for the job of empacadora. On a regular day, twenty-eight production lines run concurrently for two shifts. It is also no anomaly for each shift to go ten hours or more. Empacadoras stand at the end of the assembly lines, one on each side. A third empacadora sets up the boxes where bagged salad is packaged. The team of empacadoras rotate duties throughout the day. Production lines do not stop, even for breaks. To cover for breaks, Miracle Vegetable employs a set of workers known as “relievers.” These workers being their shift an hour or two after everyone else, and they leave an hour or two before the lines stop. For example, relievers I spoke with worked six or seven hours a day when other employees worked nine or ten hours per day. Because women relievers replace empacadoras on the lines, each of these women also needs to acquire that sensory ability to keep up with the pace of production.

The firewall against production bottlenecks that empacadoras ensure is only

one benefit. It is also important to remember that, because supermarkets do not show loyalty to bagged salad firms, one lost contract generates substantial revenue decreases for the company. Empacadoras' sensory skills not only enable on-time delivery, but protect against defective produce that may rot quickly or allow harmful microorganisms to grow. In 2006, spinach bags suffered major sales losses in the weeks and months after the e-coli scare (Arnade, Calvin and Kuchler 2007). There are other mechanisms like the quality assurance department at Miracle and the produce department at supermarkets that may still catch defective salad bags, but empacadoras have an unrecognized role in food safety. The possibility for an accident – in which a defective bag is accidently allowed to go through – is overwhelming because the lines do not stop for inspection. Yet, overall there have not been many cases of defective bags reaching consumers. Something as simple as a droplet of water inside the bag can ruin the product, but empacadoras have trained their senses to spot those issues.

Despite the economic value associated with packer jobs, empacadoras are the lowest paid workers in the factories, earning about $10.30/hr. as of 2016. Still, all empacadoras in my sample believed that their situation was improved because they were factory workers, even as they stated that the union could do more. Empacadoras also mentioned that, occasionally, a few male workers have been recently temporarily assigned to packing duties when they cannot find women replacements. Veteran empacadoras train them, and are responsible for their performance. Additionally, three empacadoras now perform the same amount of work that had been previously

assigned to four. “When Miracle closed in Yuma [Arizona], some of their supervisors moved to our plant,” one worker recalled, “and a supervisor told a group of us, ‘In Yuma we had three packers handling two lines, so we can do that here.’” Union officials and an HR employee from Miracle Vegetable confirmed that cost saving strategies reduced the number of workers from 1,200 in 2011, to 700- 800 by 2014. By assigning the same amount of work to fewer women packers, Miracle made these jobs more precarious. Unions in the area have been unable to combat layoffs or job reductions. Additionally, like women wrappers in lettuce fields, empacadoras in bagged salad are unable to convert their economic value, based on their contribution to production, into higher wages.

Estacadores

Bagged salad factories can mechanize stacking jobs, as one prominent company has done, but Miracle Vegetable prefers human labor to stack boxes of bagged salad onto pallets. The pallets are then shipped to a storage facility before going to the customer. In addition to stacking, *estacadores* are also tracking the number of boxes and pallets as production is ongoing. This means that estacadores are on alert to ensure that there is minimal over or under production. Supervisors, schedulers, machine operations quality assurance, and others share the responsibility, but estacadores, due to their position along the labor process, are the last set of eyes physically counting the number of boxes going out to the customer. As explained earlier, the shelf-life of bagged salad is about 2-weeks. There are also customers that

will only accept exact counts. Supervisors tend to be strict about exact counts due to these constraints.

Like empacadoras, estacadores also need to keep pace with the speed of the line(s) and learn to maneuver the box they are working with. For example, bags of salad come in many different sizes. That changes how empacadoras corral them and insert them into the shipping box. The shipping boxes also come in many sizes, so estacadores must also memorize the patterns of stacking individual products. Normally, just one stacker is positioned at the end of the assembly line, right next to the empacadoras. Each stacker builds his own pallet. Once complete, most pallets are over eight feet in height. Experienced estacadores learn to maneuver boxes to optimize their productivity. When staking small (light) boxes, estacadores grab up to four boxes at a time, toss them in the air, and turn around to grab the next set of four without even watching the first four boxes land perfectly positioned on the pallet. If the estacador is working with larger and/or heavier boxes, they toss them to the top of the pallet like shooting a basketball. They will even use boxes already stacked at the back end of the pallet like the backboard behind the basketball net. Estacadores simply "shoot" the box against the boxes stacked in the back, and it ricochets right into the pattern of boxes being assembled. One pallet stacker explained the processes at the of the assembly line,

> The women already have a lot of experience so they just stack a bunch of bags into the box and send you the box [down the line]. And there are two of those women; one on each side. They just keep sending boxes nonstop. As you complete one pallet and record the information of the pallet that you just finished, in that little moment, there is already a backlog of boxes. Any little moment you take off creates a

> backlog. Sometimes I get to the break bench with my shirt covered in sweat.

I saw this throughout the day, including one time when I talked to a stacker that inquired about my last day on the job as I was walking by. We talked for less than ten seconds before he had to rush back to the job. In an interview, another estacador explained that while working in the fields, he "could at least take a moment to pause, take a deep breath, wipe [the perspiration] my forehead, and not worry about the other workers besides me. I cannot do something like that here [Miracle Vegetable]. It's nonstop. We have to move together." I contrast experiences of working in the fields and in the factory later in more detail, but this was one of the few times when a person found something better about laboring in the fields than in the factory.

Like empacadoras, estacadores also found ways to accept the economic precarity that comes with the job. Estacadores make a bit more than empacadoras, $10.50 to $10.30 per hour as of 2015, which is slightly above the minimum wage in California. Yet, all estacadores that I encountered "liked" the job. As one proclaimed, "*No seinto el frio mintras me mueva*. [I don't feel the cold if I'm moving around]." There were even a few individuals that left better paying jobs in the factory to return as estacadores. One renounced his position as a machine operator because there was too much *pleito* [drama or fighting] coming from everyone. "QA tells me that I need to do a better job with the rolls," he explained, "then the supervisors tell me I need to move quicker. Mechanics want to know why I didn't stop the line, like if I knew there was a problem. And empacadoras think they know everything about my job just because they see me do it each day." His comment underscores the tension that

sometimes develops among workers. However, management, particularly crew leaders on the shop-floor, and policies in the collective bargaining agreement are the mechanisms that stress out workers the most.

Labor Control in the Factory

> The enigmatic character of Miracle Vegetable Co. is similar in many respects to that of IBM and other giant corporations which have, through one means or another, successfully avoided sustained challenges to managerial control over the work process. Long a giant in the lettuce industry, Miracle remained a place of relative calm during the highly publicized union drives among lettuce workers in the 1960s and 1970s. Miracle's reputation in the industry for technological innovation is matched by its competitors' envy for what appears to be some secret in their labor relations (Thomas 1985: 137).

The nucleus of bureaucratic control at Miracle, like in agriculture, lies in the discretionary authority granted to mayordomos. In agriculture, mayordomos used everything from intimidation to positive incentives to discipline workers while knowing that their precarious situation prevented workers from truly challenging their authority (Thomas 1985). However, at Miracle Vegetable's bagged salad factory, mayordomos' hiring authority is nonexistent. In fact, no interviewee acquired his or her job at Miracle directly from a mayordomo. All interview participants had a different story about their arrival at Miracle: a brother passing an unused application, hearing about job openings on TV or radio, going with friends to pick up an application, and so on. (I even saw bilingual job advertisements for Miracle Vegetable on flyers posted at the post office and local bakery).

Because workers do not "owe" mayordomos a favor for hiring them, different

power relations between mayordomos and workers have developed at Miracle Vegetable. As opposed to agriculture, where mayordomos exert their power in the hiring process, mayordomos' power is concentrated in the labor process at Miracle Vegetable. One of the key issues people have with mayordomos is how their authority is applied unevenly across situations, departments, and incidents. Carolina, a worker in the spinach department, feels that her relationship with mayordomos is great. However, she also explained that newer supervisors were more demanding, "They demand a lot of work. That we work as quickly as possible. They want everything done as soon as possible. They don't want us working overtime." Other employees also had issues with the pace of work set by mayordomos, who tell machine operators how fast to run the line.

The main issue, however, was mayordomos use of discretionary power. Jaime, a machine operator, elaborated, "The real controversy is their [the mayordomo's] use of power. Sometimes they make new workers take a twelve-minute break, and people know it should be fifteen. It is about their power. That's the main critique. Sometimes workers want more than is fair, but their injustices are the principle problem. A lot of people say mayordomos abuse their position." Another interviewee was a mayordomo in strawberry fields decades ago. He included that information in his original job application. He was given a bilingual oral test and a written exam in Spanish during the hiring process to see if he was a good fit for mayordomo in the factory. Having a former field mayordomo take an exam as part of their hiring highlights how Miracle Vegetable notices, at the very least, a social connection

between fields and factories. In this case, the company may have found a person with the right experience and language skills in managing farm laborers, which could be applied to the factory.

Miracle needing the "right" type of mayordomo includes being proficient in Spanish – the primary language of the shop-floor. During my time at Miracle, coworkers even joked about mayordomos that were unable to speak Spanish when they were first hired for. Most were Mexican Americans who did not speak Spanish or spoke *Español mocho* [broken Spanish] as people called it. After I left, one informant explained that a new supervisor was transferred from Miracle's facility in Ohio. He was a white man tasked with overseeing the sanitation department. The new supervisor did not speak Spanish at all and developed a reputation for chastising employees for minor incidents. Workers resented being talk to in that way. While they formally complained to the union, they also decided to work slower than normal. After a few months, they noticed the supervisor was no longer as authoritative. Language and ethnic differences facilitated workers' discontent with the new supervisor, but a lack of respect, regardless of language or race, was the main issue according to my informant.

Of all the mayordomo issues brought up in interviews and interactions with workers, stories about disrespect and disregard for dignity elucidated the most animated responses from people. One person explained, "The mayordomos sometimes yell at us, 'Hey you, go over there!' I know I come to work, and they do have extra responsibilities, but they need to have a basic understanding of how to

treat people." This same worker later explained that in the San Joaquin Valley, where he worked in agriculture, people need to be certified by an outside agency before they can be hired as supervisors. Miracle does not have similar requirements. A different worker explained that she was reprimanded for talking back. She did not deny this, but she found it comical that the mayordomo reported her since he insults workers all the time. She explained, "They brought me to the office with the mayordomo and another supervisor. He [the mayordomo] said that he did not feel safe with [just] me and him in the room alone. I laughed at him. Then I called him a liar in front of the supervisor."

Lack of respect by mayordomos was a theme throughout my interviews, but there was one intense moment involving the threat of violence. The interviewee explained,

> Two people are doing bad things to a lot of people. They are mayordomos. I think that when you hire someone, bring someone in for a higher position, you should know who they are. Who are they as people? What have they done right? What have they done wrong? One of the people from the group that I am talking about told us that she carried a knife and a gun. They are real strict when they want to and against who they want to. They immediately go after someone. We all know the rules, but if they don't like something about someone, they can fire them right away. People who made those threats are still there. They are mayordomos.

This was the only participant that expressed this level of intimidation from a mayordomo, but other participants talked about other issues such as unjust firings. A worker from the Quality Assurance department, who has not encountered personal issues with mayordomos, placed these supervisory issues within the context of union representation, "I have seen many injustices at work, done by the company, and the

union has done nothing about it. There have been unjustified firings and the union has not gotten their jobs back. I mean, it's good [that we have a union], but it's not as good as it could be."

Other employees explained that mayordomos ignore critical issues and avoid helping line workers. One person recalled when a production line was spilling water. "I told him [the mayordomo] it was not safe for me or the product," he explained, "I had to tell him again because he did nothing. After 25 minutes I told him I was leaving the line because he was not doing his job… A supervisor told me that since I left the line, it looked bad on me… '[I replied] Check out my robe, it's all wet.'" A different employee remembered asking a mayordomo for help so she could take a bathroom break, "[I asked him] 'Can you please help me a little bit or do I leave the line?' He said, 'I'll send someone because I can't help you.' I asked 'Why not?' He said, 'Because we have orders from above that we are not to touch anything [during the labor process].'" This worker has seen mayordomos help line workers, so she did not believe this mayordomo's story.

In regards to favoritism, mayordomos' discretionary authority is highlighted by how they designate assignments and distribute privileges. An employee explained that some mayordomos take finished product home, "They get to take full boxes of salads home. They share it with people in the office… We can't do it. Amongst supervisors, yes, that's OK. They fill out boxes and take them… Teresa [a mayordoma] even packs boxes for mechanics." Another employee explained that mayordomos will not send their friends to work in difficult jobs, "I think help should

go to the where there is the greatest need… But the mayordoma [in her crew] does not do that. The resources are not applied evenly." In lettuce harvesting, favoritism of and influence on mayordomos was also an important variation of labor control. For example, relatives of mayordomos working in the crew sometimes succeeded in convincing him to lower the speed of the wrap-pack assembly line (Thomas 1985).

A couple of employees blamed the current work culture on changes with upper management. One male interviewee explained, "[The current plant manager] has been here about 2 years. Before him there was a person from Santa Maria. He was good. He had a different way of thinking, a different way of working. I would say his way was much better, but the people at the top did not feel that way and fired him. The plant was doing fine, but they wanted more. It's all inside politics." This worker added that the savings Miracle expected have not materialized because their focus on workers distracts them from the real cost-savings found in excessive supervision and unnecessary machinery. For example, an x-ray style machine was installed to replace an inspector but ended up producing extra work because of the mistakes it committed. A female employee also blamed changes in plant management for reduced customer order. "When I first arrived in 2001," she explained, "there were [daily] customer orders of 130,000 boxes… But then the orders started going down. Well, a better way to put it is that the manager left, then the orders went down. They started losing customers… Today we have orders of 53,000 boxes." From this point of view, it seems that the reduction of customer orders has been confronted with a focus on labor rather than with an effort to increase orders, which is the original root of the problem

according to this informant. The discretionary authority of mayordomos is placed within this context of reduced customer orders, which is related to the customer-driven market of bagged salad and agriculture. Unlike the fields, workers in bagged salad are also better aware of upper management within the company, so they are not quick to blame mayordomos and mayordomas for issues that occur in the factory. Farm workers are not concerned with upper or corporate management since they will (likely) never encounter them on the fields.

Because workers at Miracle Vegetable have permanently settled in the Salinas Valley, they are also aware of issues that occur in other bagged salad factories. Candido Pérez has worked for several bagged salad companies around the Salinas Valley. I encountered three people like him. Like others, the compared their experiences at Miracle Vegetable to their time as farm laborers, but these three individuals were also reflexive about their experiences across bagged salad factories. As Candido explained,

> Let me tell you, the work at Miracle is faster…The supervisors *son mas cabrones* [are more callous]. There were only one or two supervisors like that when I worked at New Greens [pseudonym for another local bagged salad company in the area] … At Miracle, we had no time to talk with coworkers. The production lines keep moving during shift changes that I just move out of the way when the next guy comes in…At New Greens, there is a break in the lines as the next shift comes in, so we talk with people from the next shift.

As documented by Thomas (1985), *el estilo Milagro* [Miracle style] was an expression used by mayordomos when describing the fast-paced, rigid work environment in Miracle's lettuce fields. By contrast, the presence of the United Farm Workers in Verde Lettuce Company, the pseudonym Thomas gave to Miracle

Vegetable's main competitor in the lettuce industry, gave those workers greater autonomy over their labor as they could set the pace of harvesting and defy pressure from crew leaders to speed up. This represents a window into the sphere of labor control in Salinas Valley lettuce and bagged salad. To increase their membership, the Teamsters relinquished the control of work to Miracle Vegetable when they partnered in lettuce fields (Thomas 1985). Based on interviews with workers, Miracle's control over work, now in bagged salad, has been preserved. Teamster officials believe that the overall weakening of unions in Salinas Valley agriculture diminishes their negotiating power with Miracle. Consequently, the legacy of union relations in Salinas Valley lettuce manifests itself in the collective bargaining agreements and labor practices that structure bagged salad.

Another conspicuous theme of labor control was the point system used to punish employees. The point system can be described as a labor control tool that disciplines workers for violations related to their employment. "Think of it as getting pulled over and getting a ticket," explained Lino, "then they decide to take away your driver's license, but you still have to get to work, so you're going to drive anyway. Then you get pulled over a second time for whatever little thing. Now you pay a larger fine, and your license is suspended longer." One point can be removed after ninety days if no other violations occur, but the opportunity for continued infractions is magnified with some of Miracle's policies. A person can wake up sick, notify the company in advance that they will not be showing up, and still be punished with a point on their record. The accumulation of points can lead to suspensions and/or

dismissals. “I once missed a day because I had a sick relative in the hospital,” Lino continued, “but the doctor sent them a fax explaining that. Yet, when I arrived at work the next day, I had a point on my record. That I didn’t have a valid reason for missing work. I knew it was B.S. They didn’t know that I knew about the fax.” After complaining to human resources and the shop steward, the point was removed three days later. “But imagine how many people they’ve duped if they tried that with me? I’m just not their idiot,” he concluded. Lino’s incident occurred before the company decided to no longer accept notes from doctors, meaning that workers now get a point on their record for missing work even if a doctor is willing to corroborate their illness. All interviewees from Miracle Vegetable mentioned the point system, some even saying that being late to work by one minute would result in a point.

The point system is one difference between labor control in lettuce fields and bagged salad factories. On lettuce fields, mayordomos wielded extraordinary power over workers in their crews. As explained earlier, mayordomos’ responsibilities include direct hiring and firing, functioning as intermediaries between formal corporate structures of agribusiness and farm workers, and pushing the pace of work. In most cases, the mayordomo was also the sole authority figure on any given lettuce field (Thomas 1985). Mayordomos in bagged salad factories lose that authority as HR departments deal directly with employees and department supervisors oversee the activities of mayordomos on the shop floor. However, mayordomos in the factory still have an ability to make life miserable for workers. “They pick their favorites,” mentioned Linda Márquez, “and they’ll report people to supervisors. I mean, I have a

reputation with supervisors for being a troublemaker, and I've never even met any of them. This mayordoma just doesn't like me." She added, "Sometimes they don't know how to talk to us as people. They think we are machines." In the case of mayordomos/as, it seems that union power can be activated to challenge the position's strength as an authoritarian figure. Yet, the mayordomo system was replaced with a top-down corporate managerial regime with significant control over the lives of workers.

Individuals presented the point system as a major disciplinary concern during interviews, but working at the factory showed me that the point system is not always as menacing as people described. Even people that portrayed the point system as a form of all-encompassing labor control during initial interviews added nuances when I asked about it in follow up interviews. Teresa Mendoza was one of those workers. In her first interview, she told me that the point system was difficult to deal with. When I told her that I noticed a lot of people with a "screw it" attitude toward the point system, she agreed. "My *comadre* did that a few months ago," Teresa recalled, "she asked for three days off so she could go to Las Vegas. They said no. She said, *a la chingada* [fuck it], and went anyways. When she got back, she just signed the paper like nothing." Teresa's comadre did not say "fuck it" to the supervisor that denied her request. Teresa was describing the attitude of her comadre in the break room after she was denied. Other workers did similar things. Some did not even bother to ask ahead of time though. Instead, they would call in sick from whatever destination they were at. It was also possible to strike a deal with a mayordomo if the

worker had established a friendship with him or her. In those cases, mayordomos were told "off the record" about an upcoming absence. The mayordomo could therefore prepare the crew to be short a person or ask for a temp worker ahead of time. Trust was necessary for these situations, however, since the company pays a third-party contractor to check on employees when they are absent.

Good relationships with mayordomos are possible because, among other things, mayordomos are union workers and most of them started as rank-and-file employees. A few mayordomos are also related to production workers, so there is a family component to the labor and management relationship. Mayordomos could be seen sitting next to workers in the break room or joking along with everyone else. Banter was a mechanism to that many workers used to address mayordomos. For example, I was sitting with a group that was discussing the upcoming vote on the collective bargaining agreement. When the mayordomo came, one of the guys told him, "*Tu vete a la chingada, tu eres un pinche mayordomo*" [You get the fuck out of here, you're fucking supervisor]. Instead of leaving, the mayordomo just called the worker a *pinche guevon* [lazy ass] before joining the conversation. While I am sure incidents like this also happen in the fields between mayordomos and farm laborers, most literature in both the humanities and social sciences has not made it a central focus.

Workers also find creative ways to challenge the authority of mayordomos and management. In my initial interviews, there was never a moment when an interviewee spoke about being combative with mayordomos, but that was not the case

once I worked in the factory. There I noticed that workers, in certain moments and under specific circumstances, were unafraid to confront those in positions of power. For example, one day, I was talking with a coworker when a supervisor inquired about his start time. "I came in at 5 [a.m.]," he replied in a forceful voice. However, on that day we both walked in at 8 a.m. "Screw that guy," he told me later, "I have things to do at home. I'm not letting some new red hat [supervisor] tell me when I can leave." What is remarkable about this situation is that the supervisor could have checked the schedule, then reprimanded the worker for lying, but the supervisor chose not to address it. This worker has a well-earned reputation for foul language directed at mayordomos. Standing up to mayordomos is part of his persona at work, but most workers would not have reacted in this way. Others are not afraid to speak out against mayordomos while working on the lines as well. They talk back, shout, or insult them in front of others. In our department, there was a running joke about mayordomos sounding tough over the radio, but then cowering when confronted face-to-face. Things like this do not go unnoticed by workers looking for a reason to challenge mayordomos.

The job of mayordomo at Miracle Vegetable also seems more laborious in the factory. I spoke with a couple of mayordomo/as that explained the physical and mental difficulty of the position. One mayordoma recalled having to fight for brooms and buckets at the beginning of every shift. Apparently, there was a shortage of both cleaning items in the factory, so mayordomos had to arrive early to secure brooms and buckets – which are needed to clean around the lines. If the crew did not have

them nearby, they would have to depend on other mayordomo/as to loan them a broom or bucket. Mayordomos also physically work in the factory. The same mayordoma also mentioned that she had to push machinery, lift heavy rolls of film, and take "shit" from supervisors when things went wrong – all for an increase of a half-dollar per hour (compared to her former job as inspector in the factory). A different mayordomo stated, "If anyone is absent, I'm doing their job unless I can find a replacement. Even then, the new person won't know the work, so I have to stay with them a while." Mayordomos physically laboring was especially noticeable on Saturday nights, the shift with the most absences. During that shift, mayordomos and mayordomas are seen stacking boxes or packing bagged salad into boxes. They are responsible for meeting the shift's production quota even if crew members are missing, material arrives later than expected, or if production lines do not function smoothly. One mayordomo was working over 70 hours a week when we talked because he was doing his regular job and covering for another mayordomo who was on leave.

Gendered differences between crew leaders were also palpable in the factory. While everyone that bids on an mayordomo position is supposed to have an equal opportunity of obtaining the job, *mayordomas* were more likely to be found in the worst department or in charge of slowest production lines in the factory. For example, the area of production where shifts begin and end later was exclusively run by mayordomas. In other words, no male crew leaders were tasked with managing the area that stays longer into the night. This area of the shop-floor starts and stops its

assembly lines later due to water-restrictions that impact all production in the factory, but crews with mayordomas are more likely to be affected than those with mayordomos.

I heard stories about mayordomos petitioning the union for help in employment grievances against Miracle Vegetable, but the ones I spoke with tended to distance themselves from the union. There is a belief that supporting or working with the union will hamper their ability to move up into the ranks of supervisors. Thomas (1985: 143) reported on field mayordomos aspiring to be company supervisors one day. In the factory, mayordomos develop a hardline attitude to secure those prestigious supervisor jobs as well. For its part, the company uses mayordomos more like regular line workers now that they have a less noteworthy role as intermediaries between workers and corporate structures. Along with bilingual HR departments, labor unions are likely now the main buffers between workers and corporate management. Yet, the support from workers toward the union is situational rather than unconditional.

Unions in the Factory

After mayordomos, the Teamsters union representing workers at Miracle Vegetable was the topic that animated interviewees. The most common critiques were usually centered between paying union dues and the Teamsters unwillingness to address workplace and employment grievances. Yet, in the workplace, support for the union was more noticeable in situations when workers felt mistreated, particularly

when the mistreatment was an infringement on their rights as workers. In essence, support for the union was strongest when workers activated their collective labor power in the context of everyday work relations.

The background that workers developed with labor unions during their time as farm laborers is relevant for how they experience their situation as unionized factory workers. Ezequiel Silva was one of four people, all men, in my interview sample who used to be members of the United Farm Workers (UFW). He explained,

> I'm a Chavista, so I know what a good union looks like. That [UFW] was a good union because it was about the people. See, there is a difference between a union and a syndicate. A union is all about us workers coming together on our own. A syndicate is about leaders in the organization. This [his current union] is a syndicate. Union officials are not modest here. Chavez was all about living a modest life, fighting against injustice. These officials have it good.

The word "syndicate" is common reference for labor unions across Latin America. Ezequiel uses the word to mark his current labor union as indifferent. In contrast, his memory of the UFW, in which he was active during the 1970s, conjures up visions of unity and equality. A different worker, Juan Luis, preferred how the UFW treated everyone *parejo* [equal]. As is the case with most unionized factories, job classifications have different pay scales and labor securities. For example, machine operators are the highest paid shop-floor employees at Miracle Vegetable. They are also scheduled to receive a larger monthly pension once they retire. Workers like Juan Luis and Ezequiel, who lived through the UFW's high point, perceive that multitier-system as a form discrimination against some workers.

Candido Sanchez spent time as a UFW member while working in grape

vineyards. His recollection of those days influenced how he viewed the current union in bagged salad. "The UFW was much better," he explained, "we had our own *comités* [committees] in the field. I don't really know anything about this union. I just pay my dues." Lino Quintero also spent a few years as a UFW member while working in grape vineyards. He recalled an incident,

> This guy [the crew leader] thought we didn't know the going rate. You see, each plant has two sides, so if you finish one plant, they pay you two pieces. Well, this guy thought he was only going to pay us one piece per plant. But we put up a fight. We stopped working. They had to call in the guys in the white truck [field supervisors] … The next day, that *mayordomo* [crew leader] was all nice… Let me tell you though, if I tried something like that at Miracle, I guarantee you many people would say 'go for it, we have your back.' But once it starts, I'm sure many of those people would leave me to fight alone.

In this passage, Candido is essentially explaining how unions in field, specifically the UFW, influence his perception of the Teamsters union in bagged salad. He is also not solely blaming union leadership. Part of his critique is directed at coworkers, whom Candido feels are not militant enough to ignite real change.

Even people who were never union members during their farm labor careers held a similar sentiment towards the UFW. Rosa Barrera remembered a meeting with her union representatives: "We started telling them that they better start helping us or we would go to the UFW. They got mad but oh well." One local labor union representatives from the United Food and Commercial Workers also remembered being bombarded with UFW threats when he first arrived in the Salinas office. This is not surprising since the Salinas Valley was one of the strongholds of the UFW back in the 1970s and 1980s. The UFW's past friction with the Teamsters – who were

initially brought to the Salinas Valley by Miracle Vegetable Company to combat the more radical UFW – is part of this legacy as well.

However, not all bagged salad workers felt beholden to the UFW intrinsically. Linda Márquez stated that she was not even familiar with the idea of labor unions while living in rural Mexico or when she worked as a farm laborer in the Salinas Valley. "I had no idea that unions even existed until I worked at Miracle Vegetable," she explained while laughing about her past self, "but now I am a shop steward." Linda did not encounter the UFW in the fields because she worked there in the late 1990s and early 2000s. By that time, the UFW had been weakened by decades of agribusiness campaigns, anti-union fervor, differences between Mexican Migrants and Mexican Americans, and poor decisions by union leadership (Mireles 2005; Bardacke 2011; Garcia 2012). Other shop stewards that I spoke with did not bring up the UFW at all. They were mostly concerned with current happenings in the factory. Yet, when I asked for feedback on changes that would benefit workers at Miracle Vegetable, a person claimed that the most pressing issue was passing California's farm worker overtime bill. In fact, both the Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers mobilized their members from bagged salad factories to lobby in support of the farm worker overtime bill. The bill was signed into law in September 2016, but it will not take full effect until 2022. Bagged salad workers and farm laborers fall under two different labor jurisdictions, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act respectively, but the two workforces are inseparable due to their social, economic, and political proximity.

Depending on one's involvement with the union, individuals will either be focused on helping farm laborers or more concerned with the situation in the factories. Union officials explained that the weakened position of farm workers was a major issue for bagged salad workers because the wage structure in the Salinas Valley is one of the starting points during negotiations with employers. The problem is not restricted to farm workers though. Nonunion employees in other agricultural factories also influence collective bargaining agreements between unionized bagged salad workers and their employers. This ultimately gives bagged salad employers a built-in advantage when the union tries to secure higher wages and better benefits.

Seniority privileges are one benefit that unions have procured for bagged salad workers, but the way seniority is managed and experienced has generated feelings of ambiguity towards the policy. Some of this ambiguity was directly stated, other times it was implied. One example is how human capital operates in conjunction with seniority privileges in the factory. For Edgar Fernández, the human capital that he has fostered at Miracle Vegetable, such as learning to drive a forklift and becoming more prolific at computerized tasks, is directly tied to his current employer. After almost ten years on the job, Edgar feels fully qualified to be a forklift driver or shipping clerk at other companies. However, after a recent job search, he realized that a transition to a new employer would likely result in a lower wage because his compensation package is linked to seniority at Miracle Vegetable. Even a move to a different unionized bagged salad factory, which is only five minutes from his home compared to the thirty-minute commute to Miracle, would mean "working

nights because I'd lose my seniority." While much of our interview focused on his economic woes, Edgar was cognizant of the difficulties that a change of employers could cause even though he was not happy at Miracle. Similarly, Linda Márquez prefers morning shift at Miracle Vegetable rather than her appointment to second shift. "I have seniority [18 years at Miracle] to move to the morning," she said, "but the problem is that many morning shift workers in my position have more seniority than I do, so I would be one of the first people sent home as they finished orders. I may get 1-2 fewer hours per day." Linda is a *cajera* [shipping box handler], a worker that supplies shipping boxes to the production lines, and enjoys the job itself, but she would prefer working day shift to attend to her family during evenings. Seniority rules complicate the decision for her and Edgar since money is already scarce. In a sense, seniority offers them stability but it also handcuffs them to their current employer.

Cleavages caused by unionization and seniority policies also created tensions among lettuce workers in the past. Glass (1966) argued that industrial unions in 1950s lettuce production, with predominantly White members, observed Mexican and Filipino farm workers with suspicion. Racial and ethnic differences, along with beliefs that farm workers were competitors rather than collaborators for White packing shed workers, shaped those attitudes between unionized factory workers and nonunion farm laborers. Thomas (1985) traced how the organization of work in 1980s lettuce harvesting was influenced by unionization battles between the UFW and Teamsters. Within UFW members, high seniority crews had greater control over their

own labor than low seniority crews. This is because high seniority crews had guaranteed employment regardless of their productivity, but only the most productive low seniority crews were called in on a regular basis (Thomas 1985).

Seniority policies were indeed one of the more polarizing facets of unionization expressed in interviews. As Julián Estrada explained, "When I first got to Miracle Vegetable, there was a clear difference in hours worked between high seniority and low seniority workers. Those with high seniority worked more hours. That's no longer the case. We all work about the same now." Yet, as Laura Garza aptly stated, "The problem is not seniority. The problem is how the company manages seniority. If they would get out of the way, let us workers manage seniority ourselves, many of these disputes between workers would go away." Laura's statement gets to the core of the problem that has persisted in Salinas Valley lettuce and bagged salad. There has always been a multitude of workforces (including undocumented, temporary, union, permanent residents, U.S. citizens, and so forth), but the key issue is how these workers are managed in relation to each other. The management of workers, by privileging some at the expense of others, prevents labor solidarity from cultivating into an effective tool that can combat precarious labor practices.

Temp workers add to the complexity of seniority and union relations. Many regular employees felt as if temp workers were treated better or given more opportunities. One incident at the factory captures this dilemma. The incident occurred in a slow production week, when even high-seniority workers were only

getting six or seven hours a day. Relievers were upset because they were sent home before many of the temp workers on back-to-back days. After being told to leave for the day, relievers assembled at the shop-floor entrance, demanding an explanation. They left unsatisfied, but they nevertheless accepted the decision. A coworker explained the situation to me that same day. She said, "There were plenty of times when that happened to me but I never said anything because I can't do those jobs anyway." One of the key issues with seniority rules is that work is not neatly compartmentalized by hours or positions. For example, empacadoras with the most seniority can stay until the end of production if they chose to. But once production ends, and their duties as empacadoras are no longer needed, they would need to move into a different position if they want to continue working overtime, such as a cleaner or pallet wrapper.

Additionally, when temporary or low-seniority workers are placed in "good" (or "better") jobs within the factory, workers talk about whether that person deserves to be in the position. I too was not immune from such criticism. During my second week at the factory, a coworker, upon her return from the break room, told me about the day's gossip. People were inquiring about the new guy in shipping. The coworker mentioned that people were asking about me; why was I in that position; that if I was in another department or came straight from the agency. Based on my experience with people, full-time workers are professional in their dealings with temp labor. There is minimal resentment on a personal level. Critiques were mostly directed against the concept of temporary labor in their factory. Seniority rules contextualizes

the relationship between temp labor and union workers. Full-time union workers, out of economic necessarily, sometimes need fight for extra minutes and hours. Union officials also confirmed that temporary labor is one of the most important issues that workers bring up at meetings and discussions.

Despite criticism directed at the Teamsters, or policies of unionization, the union continues to garner majorities when they endorse a contract or go before workers for a vote of unionization. Support for the union also seems strongest after workers perceive a violation of their rights or dignity. I witnessed this with my own informants. Teresa Mendoza and Antonio Morales were among the most vocal critics of the union in my interview sample. Both complained about the lack of attention and respect that workers received from the Teamsters, and mentioned that the union only cares about collecting their monthly dues. Yet, when the company challenged the union's demands during the collective bargaining process, Teresa and Antonio were among the most outspoken supporters of the union. Both participated in a solidarity marches in Salinas and in front of the factory, handed out flyers in support of Teamsters leadership, and spoke to coworkers about the union's effort to negotiate a better contract. Even though neither Antonio nor Teresa were officially involved with the union in any formal capacity, such as shop steward, they felt a need to be active.

The crux of the dispute was Miracle Vegetable unwillingness to raise wages. Protesting workers wanted their wages to be on par with other unionized bagged salad factories in the area. When workers talked about the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) though, the conversation was based on whether a person supported the union.

In other words, supporting the CBA – after it was endorsed by union leadership – meant that one supported the union. If individuals were against the CBA, their coworkers spoke about it as being in opposition to the union.

A majority ended up supporting the CBA, but there were plenty of individuals left unsatisfied. The inability of the union to deliver economic security was at the core of their disappointment. One forklift driver that voted against the CBA stated, "*Se apendejan uno miso* [we trick ourselves]." He was specifically talking about the small wage increase, which was less than half a dollar, that most workers received in the new CBA. Yet, along with a minimal wage increase, out of pocket health care expenses went up and retirement benefits went down. Workers that voted against the CBA stressed that point in my conversations with them. Each delivered a version of the statement that the wage increase was meaningless, or a distraction, when compared to the higher prices for health care. One person who voted for the CBA, and helped organize a celebration party in the dining/break room a few days after the contract was ratified, became worried after she realized how much she would be paying for her children's doctor visits. In the end, and after some research, her earnings at Miracle Vegetable were low enough that her children qualified for the state's MediCal program, so she removed them from the company's health care plan. This coworker was a shop steward at the Miracle, and she seemed well informed about the CBA. In fact, she questioned whether I supported unions on my first day of work. Once I stated my opinion in support of unions, she became one of my best friends in the factory. When I interviewed her months later, she felt relieved that

everything worked out but wondered how she missed something as essential as changes to the health care plan. She was well informed about union issues, even participated in meetings with officials, yet did not realize that such changes were included in the new CBA.

Other workers that voted against the CBA did so because they wanted more benefits for their occupation. For example, a machine operator who spoke to me claimed that he needed at least an extra dollar an hour for his labor. Even though machine operators are among the highest paid employees and received the best overall package at Miracle Vegetable, he felt that his work was more valuable that what the CBA stated. Several machine operators and mechanics were even resented by other production workers during that time. Part of the reason for that resentment is that there was a group of operators and mechanics that were collecting signatures to invalidate the CBA that had just been approved. They argued, among other things, that the union mislead them. A worker that was against the petition told me that the group should not be attempting to overturn the vote. "Once the vote is over," she explained, "we need to support the union. Had I voted against the contract, but it won [support from the majority], I'd be done with it."

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I focus on the social structure of bagged salad manufacturing. I provide a brief overview of the commodity's rise in popularity, its production process, and market economy. The main purpose of the chapter, however, was the

ethnographic revisit of Salinas Valley lettuce. I argue that Salinas Valley lettuce fields are the foundation for precarious stability in contemporary bagged salad factories. In other words, the social system of Salinas Valley lettuce harvesting has been reproduced in bagged salad factories. Through a heuristic revisit of Thomas (1985) and others (Glass 1966 & 1968; Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981), I highlight how gender, labor control, and unionization were experienced in the past and present data on how workers in bagged salad experience these same social relations in the current moment. While I highlight differences between lettuce fields of the past and bagged salad factories of the present, individuals in both spaces nevertheless experienced a degree of precarity *and* stability. The next chapter underscores the labor market transition between fields and factories that bagged salad workers made.

Chapter 3: From Undocumented Farm Laborer to Unionized Factory Worker

INTRODUCTION

Theories of precarious labor inadequately capture the experiences of bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley because they overemphasize organizational and systemic processes rather than individuals' lived experiences (Kalleberg 2009 & 2011; Standing 2011 and 2014). The same is true about labor market theories that measure job qualities based on a dichotomy of good/bad or primary/secondary (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Piore 1979; Peck 1996; McCall 2001; Kalleberg 2009 and 2011). Overall, social science research goes beyond human capital and supply and demand theories that paint an incomplete picture of labor markets, but social scientists have also missed an opportunity to theorize about the salience of the farm labor market. In the case of bagged salad workers, what do their individualized experiences in the Salinas Valley's agricultural labor market signify about labor markets in general? Is the farm labor market different from the factory one? If so, what makes the two arenas different? This chapter underscores the labor market experiences of workers that made the transition from the farm to the factory. I focus on their migration and shifting legal status as key processes that shape their labor market experiences.

I argue that bagged salad workers develop *individualized labor markets* within primary, secondary, internal, and segmented labor markets**.** I define *individualized labor markets* as an analytical framework that focuses on how individuals give meaning to their jobs across time and space. Workers, through individualized

meaning-making processes, decide whether their jobs are good, bad, or both. They decide which factors of their employment are meaningful by assigning them a (qualitative) value. Conventional labor market research suggests that people are likely to remain in either the primary or secondary labor market for the duration of their work career (Tilly and Tilly 1998). In other words, they will remain in the labor market that they begin. Under the primary/secondary dichotomy, employment in bagged salad, like employment in farm labor, would likely fall in the secondary labor market (i.e. the one associated with bad jobs) despite labor union representation. This conclusion is accurate because factors such as income, retirement plans, and healthcare reveal a gap between jobs in primary and secondary labor markets. However, bagged salad workers, through their history of migration and interactions in the Salinas Valley, create differences between farm labor and factory work. I argue that bagged salad factories are part of primary labor market – the sector with the good jobs – from the point of view of an *individualized labor market* lens that workers in the Salinas Valley develop.

Understanding why workers make a keen distinction between farm labor and factory work provides theoretical insights on labor market research. In general, there has been a tendency to separate farm labor from other segments of the economy. For example, statistical information about the farming sector is not included in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly unemployment report. The social sciences have addressed this gap. Among the more relevant studies are Martin's (2009) focus on how the structure of the farm labor market is dependent on international migration,

Wells' (1996) emphasis on the political control of labor supply in strawberry harvesting, Lopez's (2011) account on the localized organization of social networks that link individuals to farm jobs, and Holmes' (2013) ethnography on the bodily experiences of farm workers in transnational labor market circuits. These accounts offer much needed insights for labor market research because they highlight how farm labor is embedded in the overall economy. However, this literature does not focus on labor market participants moving away from farm labor. Only Martin (2009) points out that individuals have short careers in farm labor because they will seek better opportunities. He adds that wages and marginalization of farm work are factors for people leaving the industry, but Martin does not purse information on the types of jobs farm laborers take when they abandon agriculture. Gouveia (1994) and Griffith (1995; 2011) argued that the incorporation of farm workers in poultry and meat processing factories is one of the most important labor market strategies in both industries. The strategy is effective because it lowers the price of everyone's labor in the factory due to greater exploitability of undocumented migrants and/or farm laborers. Yet, other than highlighting the similarities between Latina/o farm laborers and factory workers across the Great Plains and Southern U.S., Gouveia and Griffith do not concentrate on the social differences between farms and factories.

How differences are constructed between farm labor and factory work has direct implications for my overall argument declaring that precarious labor and labor stability reinforce each other. In the previous chapter, I argued that the labor system in Miracle Vegetable's bagged salad factory was reproduced from the company's

lettuce fields. I underlined gender, union, and labor control relations to demonstrate how those social relations were reproduced from the farm to the factory. Nonetheless, the reproduction of social relations between farms and factories do not explain why workers rationalize the latter as a better option. If the labor systems are similar, as I contend, workers would be more likely to feel no difference between the two locations. Yet, all interview participants believe that work in the bagged salad factory is better than work in the fields. In fact, only one interviewee would return to the fields *if* the job offered healthcare.

Research on workplaces where ethnic/migrant groups are overrepresented has painted a more complex picture than capture by the primary-secondary paradigm labor market paradigm. Portes and Bach (1985) find evidence of a "third labor" market that contains characteristics of both primary and secondary sectors. For example, migrant workers in the third labor market tap into their collective resources to find housing, babysitters, and defend their compatriots from workplace indignities. Zavella (1987) details how social networks can be used to socialize workers into a workplace (e.g. learn the social norms/rules of being part of the work community) and to secure resources outside of the workplace. This ameliorates some of the everyday precarity that canning workers, who are primarily ethnic Mexicans, deal with. Catanzarite (2000) demonstrates that recently arrived Latino migrants are highly segregated from U.S. born Latinos in occupations, but they are not as segregated from co-ethnic migrants who arrived earlier. Bagged salad workers are segregated as Mexicans and utilize resources from the third labor market that they construct. They

also have strong ethnic social networks. This is due to the fact that Mexicans have dominated agriculture in the Salinas Valley since the Bracero Program. Bagged salad is an extension of that ethnic community.

I return to the ethnographic revisit and the extended case method in this chapter to study the social networks and labor market processes that led individuals from farm labor to bagged salad work. The heuristic revisit in the last chapter focused on the structural and organizational, i.e. the reproduction of gender, union, and labor control between farm and factory within a single company. Understanding the ethnographic present, which is one of the key functions of the extended case method, also requires that I focus on how bagged salad workers transitioned from the farm to the factory. As Burawoy writes,

> If the heuristic revisit moves forward in time, from the earlier study to the later one that it frames, the archeological revisit moves backward in time to excavate the historical terrain that gives rise or gives meaning to the ethnographic present. If not a strictly revisit–since there is no reference study known ahead of time–it is a common technique for giving historical depth to ethnography (2009: 131).

An example that Burawoy details is quite relevant for the Salinas Valley. Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994) study on gendered migration patterns demonstrates how the Bracero Program helped organized migration flows between communities of origin in Mexico and communities of settlement in San Francisco, California. Because the Bracero Program was specifically designed to recruited male guest workers, migrants that

came during the Bracero era were more likely to be men. Women migrated in greater frequency after the program concluded in 1965. Moving backward in time through oral histories helped Hondagneu-Sotelo figure out why there were distinct gendered migration patterns, such as men migrating before their wives or women migrating on their own later in the timeline.

Before they were undocumented migrant farm workers in the United States, people currently working in bagged salad lived in Mexico. Thus, their experiences as international migrants influence how they construct notions of precarity and stability. Piore (1979) and Waldinger and Lichter (2003) demonstrate that international migrants develop a *dual frame of reference* to rationalize employment opportunities. Migrants establish their dual frame of reference by comparing job opportunities in the country of destination to job opportunities in their homelands. A "bad job" for U.S. citizens could therefore be rationalized as a "good job" by individuals that migrated due to the lack employment opportunities back home. In the next chapter, I highlight how the field, or *el fil*, is more significant for bagged salad workers' frame of reference than job opportunities in their Mexican communities of origin. For this chapter, I focus on the conversion from undocumented migrant to legal/permanent resident that many of these workers went through, and on their transition from the farm to the factory.

I apply a borderlands analysis to document how Mexican migration to the Salinas Valley was structured, how workers went from undocumented migrants to legal residents, and transitioned from the farm to the factory. Anzaldúa (1987)

conceptualized borderlands theory to account for the way in which Mexican Americans negotiate their agency. She demonstrated that this population crosses more than physical borders: they cross social, cultural, psychological, sexual, and other types of borders. More recently, Mezzadra and Nielson (2013) call for a methodological approach that emphasizes borders. They argue that *border as method* is a necessity because the multiplication of labor is a staple of our globalized world. Agier (2016) also argues that a borderlands framework is essential for contemporary research. His argument is based on ethnographic research on refugees – a population that has lost its home and are unwelcomed in new destinations. How does bagged salad workers' migration and citizenship background influence the ethnographic present? My argument is that their backgrounds fortify their lived experience of *precarious stability* in the factory. In other words, their lived experiences in bagged salad are compared to the periods of heightened insecurities that they lived through as farm laborers, international migrants, and undocumented workers.

The rest of the chapter is divided into three sections, all of which emphasize how *precarious stability* is formed through migration and citizenship experiences that bagged salad workers lived through. The first part addresses the migration history of workers. Workers detail their Mexican origins and arrival to the United States. Since farm labor was one of the main reasons why they migrated in the first place, part two covers how individuals felt about their first jobs in the United States. Social networks are of utmost importance in both migration and in the acquisition of farm labor jobs. I demonstrate how the Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986) and Bracero

Program were key moments in the lives of bagged salad workers, even for those that did not directly participate in either. Part three deals with the transition from the farm to the factory. I again focus on workers' social networks. However, as opposed to their migration and farm labor experiences, the social networks that directed them to bagged salad work readapted after settling in the Salinas Valley.

ARCHEOLOGICAL REVISIT

How Did You Get Here?

> I crossed with my *tio* [uncle]. He went to Mexico to pick me up. My family wouldn't let me go alone. He already had his papers. Because of that, he negotiated with the *coyotes*. They wanted to charge us for two people [to cross the river], but my uncle would tell them, 'Why do I have to pay if I have a *mica* [green card]? *Chingao* [shit], I can just cross through the line if you are going to be like that.' So one coyote let him come along. That was the only way he would get our money [as payment to cross the border with the coyote's group] (Interview with Celeste Muñoz, recalling her migration to the Salinas Valley in 1985).

I had a good laugh with Celeste as she explained her border crossing story. I mentioned that her uncle is like the *most interesting man in the world* from the beer commercials. Though funny, Celeste's narrative is indicative of several important points that contextualize the bagged salad worker experience. First, the reason why she migrated was specifically for a job in farm labor. As she explained earlier in the

interview, there was nothing for her back home, so the decision to migrate was simple. Being away from her parents would be difficult, but having family around her in the Salinas Valley alleviated some of her anxiety. Second, Celeste relied on her family in the Salinas Valley for support in the journey. Her uncle not only paid for the coyote, but he also picked her up in *Las Jicamas*, *Guanajuato* (Central Mexico). They made the 2,000-mile journey together. Once at they reached the border, her uncle, despite having legal documentation, made the illegal crossing so she would not go alone. Celeste also mentioned that her brothers made the same journey on their own a few years later, but that her family only prohibited her from traveling solo. Third, that Celeste's family had the resources to help her in 1985 highlights how Mexicans, through a combination of migrants and Mexican Americans, had firmly established communities in the Salinas Valley by the 1980s. A reoccurring theme in most interviews was how these communities were composed of people from the same hometown in Mexico.

The story of Irma Valenzuela reveals some of the intricacies of these hometown networks. Irma migrated from *Chupícuaro*, *Guanajuato* in 1977. "I was always getting headaches back then, when I was 17," she began as I asked for information on why she migrated. Irma continued, "I went to the doctor. He told me that I was getting headaches because I wasn't married. That I needed to get married for my headaches to go away. I decided to leave *Chupícuaro* after that." Like Celeste, Irma, at the age of 18, had to persuade her parents to let her migrate. Irma did not have any direct relatives in the Salinas Valley though, but she was in contact with

former neighbors who were known across *Chupícuaro* for helping migrants from the town settle in the Salinas Valley. The neighbors, a heterosexual couple with two children, had a home in the town of Greenfield. Her parents knew the family when they lived in *Chupícuaro*, and their reputation for helping migrants from the town was well known by the time Irma left for the Salinas Valley. Irma's father accompanied her to the border, where a coyote crossed her in a car by using someone else's birth certificate. Irma believes that was possible because she was still a teenager. The home that Irma's sponsoring family rented in Greenfield had been used several times to host people like Irma. "Other women that I knew from *Chupícuaro* did the same thing," Irma explained, "they lived with the family and worked with them in the fields. Sometimes they babysat the children instead of heading out to the fields. The man was a good friend of the *mayordomos* that we worked with, so they were fine with me not showing up from time to time [to stay with the family's children]." Irma lived with them for two years, until she married another resident of *Chupícuaro* who was also in the Salinas Valley. "There were times when I felt more like a daughter," she continued, "I gave them money every month, but they never asked for it. I would go to the market with them and they would be fine with me putting shampoo and things like that in the family cart [which they would pay for]." After Irma left, a few other women from *Chupícuaro* followed her same track: they migrated from the town, lived with the family for a short time, and then settled on their own in the Salinas Valley.

Cupareo is another rural town from the state of Guanajuato that sent migrants

to the Salinas Valley. Efrain Delgado, born in *Cupareo*, made the journey thanks to his father. "My dad was a Bracero," Efrain stated, "so he knew *Grinfil* [Greenfield] already. When it [the Bracero Program] ended, he applied for a visa. One of the guys that he used to work for sponsored him. So he [Martin's father] left about ten years before we [the rest of the family] did. He wanted me and my brothers to be older when we got there, so we could also work. *El nos arregló* [he sponsored us]." Because of his Bracero father, Efrain did not suffer due to an undocumented status. Within the farm working community of the Salinas Valley, those with Bracero roots are privileged vis-à-vis those that do not trace their migration directly to Bracero relatives. Flores' (2016) historical study of the Salinas Valley corroborates this, as does Du Bry's (2007) ethnographic investigation of Mecca, CA. For example, those with Bracero roots are more likely to own homes and possess the better jobs within farm labor. Yet, those that did not personally have Braceros in their families, such as Celeste and Irma, could link to the social networks that Braceros establish across Guanajuato and other Mexican states.

Elva Plata and Dolores Zuniga, both originally from *Michoacán*, share a similar story. Each was dating a son of a Bracero when they were teenagers in *Michoacán*. Elva ran away from home with her boyfriend, who later became her husband, when his Bracero father sponsored him to come to the United States. "To tell you truth," she stated, "I don't think we even needed a permission to cross... His uncle picked us up in Tijuana. He spoke English. I think he told *la migra* [the border agent] that we were his kids. The guy just waved us through. Didn't ask for anything."

I asked if everything had been planned this way. “Oh no,” she replied, “Mario’s father was stunned when he saw me. He was mad but he didn’t say anything to me. I learned about it from Mario after he came home from work the next day [in the fields].” Though she remained in communication with them, Elva saw her family a few years later when she returned to Mexico to complete her legalization paperwork. Dolores was also able to leave *Michoacán* because she married the son of a Bracero. She did cross the border illegally to get to the Salinas Valley. “He was already working over there, so he paid for my trip,” she recalled, “My aunt and uncle [who were also already in the Salinas Valley] took a few days to greet me in *la frontera* [the border]. *Tenían documentos chuecos para que cruzara por la línea* [They had false documents so I crossed through the line].” Elva and Dolores have been friends all their lives, first in *Michoacán* and now in the Salinas Valley. They worked together in the fields and at Miracle Vegetable. I was introduced to Elva by Dolores through snowball sampling.

It was no surprise that most people I encountered over the course of this research came from Central Mexican states like Guanajuato and Michoacán since the Bracero Program recruited heavily in that region, but even individuals from other regions linked to the social networks that Braceros from Central Mexico created. Mauricio Rivera was one of those people. Originally from Oaxaca, a state in Southern Mexico, he left his three children with his parents after his wife passed away. Unlike the Elva, Celeste, Irma, and Efrain, he crossed into the United States after the passage of NAFTA. “I left in 1996,” he recalled, “At first I was just going to *la Zona Norte*

[Northern Tijuana]. I had a *camarada* [“comrade” or “friend] there.... One day we met this guy who knew people in Fresno. *Era Zacatecano* [He was from the state of Zacatecas]. He told us he could get us work in *el tomate* [the tomato].” Mauricio described how he used a *tabla* [a log] to cross a river. “After we got to the other side,” he continued, “we were taken to some place. I can’t tell you for sure what town it was, but we stayed in a garage for a day.” After that, they were picked up by a relative of Mauricio’s contact and taken to a town near Fresno.

While most individuals followed the Mexico to California track, Ramon Palomares took a different route. “I’m from *Villagrán, Tamaulipass*. I first moved to Matamoros [Tamaulipas] in ‘84… Its right across from Brownsville, Texas [Ramon pronounces it as *Bronsvil*],” he commented. “I worked in all the crops *en el Valle* [Rio Grande Valley],” Ramon continued, “before a friend asked me if I wanted to go work in California. I was already legal [after IRCA], had no wife or kids, so I told him ‘*vámonos’* [Let’s go]. That’s how I got to Salinas.” He expected things to be better in California because of the United Farm Workers, but eventually realized that working in Salinas Valley farm labor was no better than in Texas. “*Es la misma chingadera* [it’s the same shit],” he said after I asked, “*Pero aquí se ay un poco más recursos si te pasa algo* [but there are more resources here if something happens].”

I have so far described migration experiences of only people over 50, but younger migrants are also part of the bagged salad labor force. This highlights the importance of age in how people experience bagged salad. Chuy Ortiz is one of them. He came to the Salinas Valley at the age of seven and was thirty-two at the time of

our interview. We conducted the interview in English. “I was born in *Acámbaro*, Guanajuato,” he stated, “Ever since I was small I can remember people leaving *Acámbaro* for Greenfield, Soledad, Gonzalez [towns in the Salinas Valley]. My uncle was living in Soledad. I stayed with his family for all my childhood. Really, until I graduated high school and got married.” I asked how he arrived to the Salinas Valley, “I remember hiding in a van when I crossed, but I don’t remember much. Only that my dad took me and my uncle picked me up.” He returned to Mexico at the age of 20 to get his green card in order. “I worked in the fields during every school break,” Chuy added, “me and my cousin [his uncle’s son]. As soon as I got my papers, I was like ‘fuck that.’ I looked for work in the *empaques* [packing sheds].” He now works at Miracle Vegetable along with his cousin. Miguel Mandujano is another member of the younger cohort. He was thirty-five when we talked. “My dad left when I was little,” Miguel stated in English, “I know he was around when I was born [in *Cupareo* Guanajuato], but I was an infant. I was six when I met him in ‘89. After he got his papers in ‘86, he brought me and my mother. They had another son and daughter here” Miguel continued, “He [the dad] knew all the people from *Cupas* [nickname for Cupareo] in Greenfield. We lived in a little apartment complex. All of our neighbors were from *Cupas.*” I asked if he recalled any dangers about the journey. “Honestly, no. We left on a plane from *Celaya* [Guanajuato]. I do remember my parents talking about how *la migra* would show up to the fields. People would run, but they [his parents] were legit.”

I highlighted people from *Cupareo, Chupícuaro,* and *Las Jicamas* Guanajuato

to demonstrate how, from a labor market perspective, many bagged salad workers depended on hometown social networks to arrive in the Salinas Valley. The Bracero Program was essential for the formation of social networks that connected people from Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco, and other Central Mexican states to the Salinas Valley. Gendered and generational experiences within these migration flows were part of the process. Another important point, which speaks about the diversity within networks, is how outsiders, those not born in the towns where the social networks originated, managed to connect with the networks as their density expanded.

Farm labor was the underlying characteristic of social networks. This has also been corroborated by Lopez (2007). People do not migrate desultorily in search of work. Bagged salad workers first arrived in the Salinas Valley because their contacts, whether family members, close personal friends, or acquaintances, had connections to agriculture in the area. In chapter two, I revisited Thomas' (1985) account of the Salinas Valley lettuce industry. He described how hometown networks were a critical aspect of the farm labor market in the Salinas Valley since people had a better chance of securing jobs in agriculture if they knew someone on the crew. In the next section, I describe their initial work experiences in the field. The purpose of the analysis is to demonstrate how *dual frame of reference* explains some elements of the labor migrant experience, but falls short on explaining other aspects (Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). These early experiences of farm work also inform how bagged salad workers reflect upon their time in the factory.

How did you get started in the field? What did you think about it?

> How do I tell you? I was the pretty girl in the *cuadrilla* [crew]. I was only 19 when I started in '72. Honestly, I'm embarrassed to tell you this, but the guys did a lot of the work for me. Probably a majority of my work. They'd see that I was always behind everyone else [in weeding her row], and they'd rush over to help me. That's how I'd stayed caught up. We were earning the same. And some of the other *mujeres* [women] would get mad, especially *las doñas* [older women]. Now that I'm one of the *viejitas* [older women] in the plant [Miracle Vegetable], I see why those *mujeres* got mad. I see these young girls coming here, and the guys act like if they're in *la secundaria* [high school]. The difference is that no one can help you here [at Miracle]. You have to do your own the work… I'm one that they [supervisors] always pick to train *las chicas nuevas* [new young female coworkers] … They get me mad all the time, by being *flojas o lentas* [lazy or slow]. But, I just take a breath and remember how it use to be [as a young female farm worker].

This excerpt is from an interview with Nancy Trujillo, a woman in her early 60s originally from Zacatecas who, at the time of this interview, had worked at Miracle Vegetable for twenty-three years. In the excerpt, Nancy's experience as a farm worker does not match the cruelty that others describe. Still, the except serves as an example of how farm labor influences how workers behave in the factory. "I tell these

young girls to go to school," Nancy later continued, "They will not like growing old in this place [Miracle Vegetable]." I followed up by asking, "But you said it's good?" To which Nancy replied, "For me. Not for them. *No hay nada pa mi aparte de esto* [there's nothing for me aside from this]." For Nancy to feel this way, she had to consider her entire time as a farm laborer, not just the early part of it when she was a young woman.

Mauricio, the person from Oaxaca introduced earlier, had a different experience when he first started in farm labor.

> We [his friend from Tijuana] started working the next day after we got to Huron [a small town about an hour from Fresno, CA]. Honestly, after everything, it wasn't hard, but I had to get used to working like that. *Yo soy del campo* [I'm from the countryside]. But, this was different. Back home I did not have to hurry so much, and I didn't really care about the time. I stopped to eat whenever I got hungry, when I needed to rest, whatever. Here its different. You have to wake up on time to catch your ride. You have start together [with the rest of the crew], take your breaks and lunch together. You care about the clock all day. Is it time for break? Is it time for lunch? Is it time to go home?... It was about learning *el movimiento y el ambiente* [the movement and atmosphere of work] more than anything.

Through Mauricio's recollection of his initial time as a farm worker, he makes two noticeable points that are relatable to other bagged salad workers. First, labor

migration, and its inherent motivations such as poverty and lack of jobs in the home country, will make farm labor "a good job" as *dual frame of reference* posits (Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). As exploitative as it is, farm labor is an improvement for migrants escaping poverty, hunger, violence, and other hardships in their home country. For Mauricio, the death of his wife is included in those hardships. Farm work is contextualized by the privations that cause migration and the difficulties of the farm worker journey, as Lopez (2007) articulates, from one location to another. Second, a migrant's *dual frame of reference* is not oblivious to nuances. As Mauricio indicates, work in Oaxaca was not necessarily worse across the board. He seemed to have more autonomy with his time, in organizing his schedule, and did not depend on others. In California, he works with a clock in mind and as part of a social crew (e.g. taking breaks together) rather than a simple work crew. Thus, dual frame of reference, while accurately describing economic/wage comparisons between two nations, does not always capture how certain elements of employment may nevertheless be better in the home country than in the receiving one (Zavella 2011).

Additionally, Mauricio's story also reveals how people were thrust right into farm work when they arrived in California. Before they migrated, individuals knew that they would find jobs in farm labor. After all, their contacts, who are not strangers, assured them. Teresa Mendoza story matches this account. She migrated from the Mexican state of *Colima*. She and her husband made the journey together in 1980, leaving behind two small children under the care of her husband's parents. The husband had contracts with people that migrated from their town in Colima to King

City, California. For her first job as a farm worker, Teresa worked harvesting peppers. The crew was composed of people from her home town. "The first thing I learned is that I always need a social security number to work," Teresa recalled, "They [people from Colima] gave that to us [her and her husband] and we showed up with it to the field. The *mayordomo* wrote it down and that was that." Later in the interview, Teresa added, "Its been so long, but I think it took me a few months before I was right in the field. Even though I knew a lot of the people, I couldn't get their *cotorreando* [clowning around]. I mean, why do it? Work was not fun. We have to wake up early and work hard all day… but after a while I understood. I started to get *las mañas de ellos* [their customs]." Here we see how Teresa "became" a farm worker. She didn't just have to learn the work, she had to learn the culture to fit in with people from her hometown.

Elva and Dolores, introduced earlier for their migration from Chupícuaro, Guanajuato, also spoke about adjusting to farm labor. They both utilized contacts from Chupícuaro to get their first farm jobs. "*A los tres días de llegar la andaba en el fil* [I was in the fields three days after arriving]," Elva mentioned, "*Si estaba cañon*[13] [it was "difficult"], why lie. The sun, the wind, everything I did not like. It wasn't calm like Chupícuaro. *Pero me empique a los cheques* [But I grew accustomed to the paychecks]." For her part, Dolores remembers hearing the phrase "*querías norte?"* during her first day on the job. "Some *payaso* [clown] told me that," she said, "I knew him from Chupícuaro. He saw me *batallando con la pisca* [battling the harvest] …

[13] The euphemism literally means "canon" but, as in this case, *cañon* can also be used as a substitute for the Mexican cussword "cabron."

After I got the hang of things, I started telling that [phrase] to the new people from Chupícuaro." The phrase "*querías norte?*" is a rhetorical question which, in certain contexts like this one, is meant to make light of someone struggling or going through a difficult time in the North. It translates as "you wanted to come to the north?" It would be like asking someone "you wanted to work in construction?" after they are seen struggling in a construction job. While all interviewees struggled in those initial days as farm laborers, they settled into a pattern and grew accustomed to it. Being members of their hometown community facilitated that process. As Efrain Delgado pointed out, "It was good because we were all from *Cupareo*. We were relatives and friends over there and over here."

That said, there was also a downfall to having a work crew composed of friends and relatives. "We all wanted to be the best," Efrain later explained, "I wanted to be first, like all the other guys. We were racing going down the *surcos* [row of crops]." After I interrupted to inquire if it was a piece-rate job, Efrain explained, "For that it didn't matter. I mean, yes, we got paid more *por contrato* when we worked hard, so it was sometimes necessary to work hard, but even when it was by the hour, we wanted to be better than everyone else. You especially didn't want to be in the back. That meant you were old." Efrain also added that in most cases, the *mayordomo* would *not* pressure them to work that fast. It was a self-sustained pace. Others also suggested that it was necessary to keep pace with at least the middle of the pack. A lot depended on the context though. For example, young men competed with other young men, but not with older men. Women and men did not compete regardless of age, and

so on. Above all, such competitions among farm workers are an example of how the job becomes detrimental over time. Eventually, workers will be unable to compete with the new arrivals. At that point, the job may have a different meaning for them, making the comradery of the hometown social network no longer as important of a factor.

Individuals' shifting meanings of work highlights another shortcoming with *dual frame of reference*. In the case of people who migrated to work in agriculture, there comes a point when Mexican labor markets are no longer important to them. Eventually, farm work is no longer reflected upon as a great job since workers are fully embedded in U.S. labor markets. For example, Ramón, who arrived to the Salinas Valley after migrating form Tamaulipas, Mexico to Brownsville, Texas, got tired of the field after a few years. "It was never easy," he began, "but it was harder as time went by. At first, I wanted to be *el rey del tomate o el rey the los lechuga* [the king of tomato or king of the lettuce], but there came a point when it wasn't worth it anymore. I don't need to be *el mero chingon* ["the alpha male"] … As time passed I didn't care if I was in the middle of the pack." Ramon added, "I knew what was coming if I stayed longer. I was going to in the back with the older men." For Ramon, the physicality of farm labor compelled him to look for work in agricultural factories.

Borderlands theory helps explain the process of making farm labor a less celebrated occupation[14]. The first border crossing occurs when Mexican migrants

[14] While one could argue that there are continuous border crossings in everyday life (Stephen 2007), my focus here is on major structural borders, such as class and geopolitics, in relation to this population.

leave their hometown life for employment in farm labor. While there may be other structural border crossings earlier in their lives, this is a useful starting point since it represents bagged salad workers coming of age as adults and/or wage-earners. They cross from a calm, mostly rural lifestyle, to a fast-paced, intense routine in the Salinas Valley. When this crossing occurs, earning U.S. money and being surrounded by friendly, familial co-ethnics, both at the workplace and in the community, ameliorates some of the difficulties of being a farm laborer. However, as time passes, farm labor becomes more difficult. That enhanced difficult is the second border crossing. It is a social-psychological crossing since they remain in farm work, but have a different perspective about it. Among the factors that make farm labor more arduous are age, the accumulation of the physical toll, new conceptualizations about work and earnings, and realizing that the Salinas Valley is their new home. As Irma stated, "Once I started having children, it was different. I needed something better. Farm work was fine when they were young, but as they grew up I needed to give them more. For school, for clothes, all those things added up." She continued, "they [her children] also started understanding that we were poor." Irma's statement demonstrates how border crossings are contextualized by a localized community.

The third border crossing, which, by many accounts, is the key one in terms of getting a job in bagged salad, is the legalization of their migration status. Legalization is a critical border crossing for two reasons. First, individuals go from undocumented migrants to legal residents. Their new citizenship classification grants them the ability to call the Salinas Valley "home." They are no longer concerned with deportation,

losing a job over their status, or leaving their children behind. Individuals can also open bank accounts, apply for low income housing, unemployment insurance, and other programs. Second, being a legal resident also pushes them further away from the undocumented community. I do not suggest that they are physically more distant from undocumented migrants or that they no longer find solidarity with undocumented compatriots. In fact, bagged salad workers have always lived and interacted with undocumented migrants in the community. But having a legal status removes the stigma of being undocumented within a farm working community. As Du Bry (2007) argues, legal residents get the better jobs within farm labor. Employers know who is legal and undocumented, and they direct them to jobs accordingly. Additionally, there was a shift during the 1990s when immigration law switched from being handled by civil courts to criminal ones. Because of their legalization, bagged salad workers were not *directly* impacted by this move. By losing the undocumented status before the criminalization of immigrants expanded in the 1990s, bagged salad workers avoided any *direct* implications of that criminalization.

In the next section, I look at the labor market process of going from the farm to the factory. Workers changing legal status, from undocumented to legal/permanent resident, was a key variable in that transition. Reconfigured social networks that developed as bagged salad workers settled in the Salinas Valley was another critical element of that labor market process. In other words, workers were no longer are as reliant on hometown networks once they settled in the region. They instead utilized work-based networks composed of Salinas Valley acquaintances. As I indicated in the

introduction to this chapter, I call these *individualized labor markets* because workers themselves make a clear distinction between jobs on the farm and jobs in the factory. So while bagged salad factory jobs fall under the secondary labor market in academic research, workers do not see it that way.

Como Consiguió Trabajo En La Fabrica? [How Did You Find Work in the Factory]?

In each interview that I conducted with bagged salad workers, I gave them a synopsis of my project. I would then ask each interviewee to estimate the percentage of their co-workers who, a) came from Mexico as undocumented migrants, b) worked as farm laborers when they arrived, and c) gained legal residency before they arrived at the bagged salad factory. Everyone confirmed that a vast majority of their coworkers came from that trajectory. Common answers included "90 percent," "95 percent'" and "all of us." Over the course my research, I encountered many individuals that did not meet this exact profile, yet, a majority did match this description. The most impactful moment in this trajectory, in terms of permanently settling in the Salinas Valley and obtaining employment in bagged salad, was gaining legal residency.

Several different mechanisms guided these individuals to legal residency, but the most widespread process involved the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). IRCA granted permanent residency to undocumented migrants who could prove they had been working as farm laborers for 90 days before the passage of

the law. “It was the immigration law in ’86, that’s how I got my papers,” explained Mariela, “it wasn’t difficult to prove that I had been her working [as a farm laborer]. The companies wanted us here, so they gave us all the information.” I followed up by asking if any organizations helped migrants get their paperwork in order during that time. “I really don’t remember to tell you the truth,” she responded, “but the company that I worked for at the time told us everything we needed to know. Maybe there were other places where people found that information, but most of the people I know heard from their company.” This highlights how agribusiness firms had a vested interest in legalizing its workforce. Besides labor needs, all companies would be subject to fines if they were found to be hiring undocumented workers after IRCA. The story about IRCA leading to legalization was repeated in many of my interactions with bagged salad workers.

Yet, others also pointed to the Bracero Program and to marriages as reasons for their legalization. As I explained above, Elva and Dolores, both from the same town in Michoacán, married sons of Braceros. Thus, they could officially enter the U.S., after returning to Mexico to process the paperwork, through family reunification policies. This highlights how Bracero social networks did not exclude undocumented migrations. Migrants of all legal statuses utilized Bracero social networks to arrive in the Salinas Valley. As their communities expanded in the Salinas Valley, the networks began to include more legal residents and citizens.

Marriages between migrants and citizens was also a way that some individuals gained legal residency, particularly does that arrived after the passage of IRCA. El

Caballo[15] [The Horse] arrived to the Salinas Valley in 2000 as an undocumented migrant. He worked as a farm laborer until 2010 when he secured a job at Miracle Vegetable. "My wife is a U.S. citizen," he explained, "that is how I got my residency. We married in 2008." He is now in his late 30s and struggles with an injury that he suffered while working as a farm laborer. "I can't work in the fields any more even if I wanted to," he claimed. Four other interviewees married U.S. citizens to gain legal residency. As was the case with El Caballo, the people they married were not from their hometowns in Mexico. El Caballo is from Jalisco, but his wife's family comes from Sonora. The other marriages involved partnerships between people who originated, or had families that originated, from Oaxaca and Jalisco, and Aguascalientes and Baja California. The fourth such marriage involved an undocumented Salvadoran and Mexican with naturalized citizenship.

The children of former undocumented migrants, unsurprisingly, also benefited from their parent's legalization. As Juan Jose explained, "When I was little I remember my parents talking about that all the time. I'd be afraid that one day they would be picked up while at work, cause they'd always be talking about the migra showing up in the fields to pick people off." He continued, "I was 10 when they got their papers… its kinda hard for me to tell you how I felt then. Like I said, I was afraid but, I guess, because it never happened [his parents getting deported], I don't think I really understood it until now that I see what other people are going through."

[15] This is also a pseudonym since many people at Miracle Vegetable are known by their nickname rather than real name. The interviewee suggested this name to avoid his using his true nickname.

I asked if his parents legalization "helped" him get a job in bagged salad. "Not necessarily in the factory, but it helped of course. I mean, my friends hooked me up with the job, but it [their legalization] definitely helped me. It's just hard to tell you exactly how" he responded.

In addition to their stories of legalization, bagged salad workers also have diverse ways of getting the job in the factory. Juan Jose he had to borrow his friend's address to apply for the job. "Back then, you had to live in [the town where Miracle Vegetable is located]," he stated, "The company signed a contract with the city that they would only hire people from the town for the first seven years [after it opened]. Since I'm not from [that town], my friend let me use his address. That's how I got the job." I do not use the name of the town to protect the anonymity of research participants, but I verified this by accessing city council records. Three other interviewees did the same thing as Juan Jose by borrowing addresses to apply at Miracle Vegetable.

The example above highlights how getting a job in bagged salad is different than getting a job in farm labor. As Chuy Ortiz explained,

> My *primo* [cousin] started working there before I did. He's two years older than me. When I was a senior in high school, he was already working at the factory. He was in the shipping department. That's not where he started. That's where he was at when I got there… I started working the summer right after I graduated. My primo told the supervisor that I was looking for work. He asked him if they needed

> someone. What happened is that one day some guy went to work fucked up [either drunk or on drugs]. He got fired, but they were short people. My cousin calls me later that day. He tells me they'll hire me if I show up the next day. So yeah, I just went with my primo. I filled out the application and started working right away.

At the time that I began my interviews in 2011, Miracle Vegetable had just begun to use temporary staffing agencies to fill labor shortages. Until then, the company relied on family contacts and one-day job fairs to secure workers. Chuy, like most people interviewed for this project, arrived at the factory before temporary staffing agencies were involved.

Chuy's acquisition of his job at Miracle Vegetable demonstrates a few changes that occurred within the social networks of bagged salad workers. On one hand, the social network linking *Acámbaro*, Guanajuato to the Salinas Valley remained intact. In the past, his uncle would provide the connections to employment in the fields. However, to get a job in bagged salad he relied on his cousin's contacts in the factory. This is still the same network, but the final approval for Chuy's hiring came from a mayordomo from the state of Queretaro. In the fields, the mayordomo would very likely be from *Acámbaro* if the crew members were from that location. Eventually, Chuy realized that the rest of the workers were from all over Mexico. "Yeah, the times that I'd work in the fields during summer, I would be next to uncles and aunts *en la chinga* [while working]," he explained, "but here people are from all over the place. After you're here a while, you know *fulano* [such and such] is from

Las Santas Marias, Michoacán, and another person from Jalisco." Chuy continued, "There are other people from *Acámbaro* here but everyone is scattered. It's not like we sit together for break, because each crew takes a break at a different time. Everyone also comes in their own car, leaves when their own shift ends… There's really no time to kick back with the people from *Acámbaro*."

People also acquired their job at the factory through public spaces. In these instances, most of which occurred before temporary staffing agencies were part of the labor market process of matching individuals to jobs, there was a labor shortage that needed immediate attention. As Teresa Mendoza told me, "I just went to city hall to pay the water bill. I saw they had a table out there so I asked what they were doing. They told me they were looking to hire people for the Miracle Vegetable factory, and asked if I was interested. I said yes. I filled out the application right there, they helped me. They called me later that day. I showed up at the factory the next day." Other individuals gave me a similar story. They happened to see a Miracle Vegetable booth outside of city hall and inquired about it. There are also job fairs that the company participates in. Jaime Trujillo was hired at one of these company job fairs. He was a temp worker at the time, but a supervisor told him to show up at the job fair and he would be hired directly by the company. "Yeah," Jaime expressed in English, "I had been a temp for a few months. [Supervisor] told me to go to the job fair. I filled out the application and they hired me. I just took the drug test the next day, but that wasn't a real drug test. They just put a [cotton] swab in my mouth, so they were basically just checking that I wasn't on anything at that moment."

Jaime and another interviewee are former prisoners, both involved in felony convictions, but that did not prevent them from being hired. "*Neta* [honestly]," Jaime confessed to me, "I didn't put that in the application. Someone told me they didn't even check, so I was like fuck it." The other interviewee with a felony conviction did include this information in his application. "The cool thing," he said, "was that all the supervisors already knew me. They knew what was up. They did me a *paro* [slang for "favor"] … What did trip me out was [name of office HR employee processing his application]. When I went to the office, she was just looking at the *tacas* [slang for "tattoos"] on my neck. I felt like yelling at her, 'Lady, my eyes are up here!', but I kept cool." These two individuals started out with the agency but were hired by the company. Jaime took about 5 months, but it took my other contact almost a year to be hired by the company from the time he started as a temp. Both originally heard about getting a job at Miracle Vegetable from their neighbors. They were told which temporary staffing agencies to apply to.

Farm worker housing policies and programs are another way that hometown social networks get modified and lead people to the bagged salad factory. For example, since 1980, the Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc. (CHISPA) has been active in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties. CHISPA is a nonprofit housing developer in the Central Coast California region. It is funded by federal, state and private donations. One of its key functions is to establish affordable housing, both apartments and family homes, for farm workers. For example, I interviewed eight people from the same neighborhood in the town of

Greenfield. Each of them are homeowners because of CHISPA. The housing is affordable because farm workers and their families help build the houses. They usually put in a few hours after their workday is complete in the fields and a full-day on Saturday and/or Sunday. There are expert construction workers alongside the farm laborers, but farm laborers do many of the same functions. "All of us would go," explained Baldo Lopez, "Me and my wife would go right after work. This was in '90. We'd take our kids to help on Saturday." The thing about housing programs like CHISPA is that they are not restricted to hometown networks. A person only needs to be employed in farm labor and have legal residency to qualify for one of these low-income loans. CHISPA also builds apartment complexes throughout the Salinas Valley. Farm worker families are given an opportunity to apply. This ultimately mixes up farm laborers from different hometowns and regions. For example, the neighborhood block where Baldo build his home has farm worker families from Guanajuato, Queretaro, Michoacán, Jalisco, Zacatecas, and other locations. Thus, the families interact with each other and expand their individualized social networks. Once they have secured their homes, individuals can move out of farm labor, as was the case with the bagged salad workers from Baldo's neighborhood.

The neighborhood where Baldo and the seven other interviewees live represents a microcosm for how their personalized social networks readjust by living in the Salinas Valley. In sum, people have less contact with individuals from their hometown in Mexico, and more contact with people from other regions in Mexico. As Paula Fernandez, who lives near Baldo, put it, "Before I would always depend on

my husband to get jobs in the field. We knew people from Chupícuaro, but he'd do all the reaching out [looking for work] … I got the job at Miracle Vegetable in 2005 because my neighbor Anita had an application. Her sister brought it for her, but she [Anita] never used it. She told me if I wanted to apply to Miracle Vegetable. I took the application. Anita drove me to turn it in and I started working the next day." Maribel, who also lives on the same block as Baldo and Paula, also expanded her social network to include more people from other regions in Mexico. "It just happened. Juana [a neighbor] picked me up to go do laundry. When we got there, one of her friends was there. She told us there were hiring at Miracle Vegetable. That we needed to go to [the town], outside the city hall, for an application. I was already going to work in the lettuce in March, but I started at the factory instead." Maribel is from Guanajuato, and her neighbor Juana from Sonora. Both of their families qualified for CHISPA housing, and they ended up living next to each other. This augmented Maribel's contacts in the Salinas Valley, and led her to a job in bagged salad.

CONCLUSION

The Bracero Program proved to be indispensable for the Salinas Valley. It spanned over two decades, but left an indelible mark on the area by creating migration flows between rural towns, particularly those in Central Mexican states, and the Salinas Valley. Braceros did not just work the fields during World War II and in the ensuing decades, they also learned the routes to the Salinas Valley- including

the routes to specific farm jobs and employers. As the program concluded, Braceros applied for residency in California. This gave them the ability to bring over family members to the Salinas Valley. People from their hometowns in Mexico also linked with the social networks and made their way to the Salinas Valley. Because of the hometown network dynamic, Mexican migrants working as farm laborers in the Salinas Valley secured employment with close friends and relatives.

Migrants that did not enter the United States legally were given opportunities to gain legal residency. IRCA is one of the key laws that allowed undocumented farm laborers to gain legal residency. For agribusiness, this meant having a stable labor force residing in the Salinas Valley year-round. For farm laborers, it gave them the ability to build their lives in the region. As the community grew, people from different regions in Mexico came together. They expanded their social networks through living with and interacting with each other.

Hometown networks conglomerated in the Salinas Valley through like marriages, housing policies, and social programs. People who at one point depended on hometown networks to secure work and services could now utilize contacts within their neighborhoods regardless of where those individuals originated from. Like in any society, people starting marrying people from different hometowns and regions. This created a web of citizens, legal residents, undocumented migrants of Mexican descent in the Salinas Valley.

In the next chapter, I focus on how a farm worker identity, which was built over the years as different Mexican hometown communities interacted with each

other in the Salinas Valley, plays inside the factory. The factory is a predominately Mexican workplace. As I will demonstrate, farm worker experiences help turn a “bad job” into a “good” job.

Chapter 4: Precarious Stability in Everyday Life

INTRODUCTION

> And if going home is denied to me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and my own feminist architecture (Anzaldúa 2007: 44).

Precarious stability in bagged salad factories is fundamentally attached to farm labor. The key issue is that bagged salad workers never really left the field. *El fil*, the name that the Mexican community in the Salinas Valley gave to "the field," continues to literally surround them in everyday life. Thus, bagged salad workers straddle the borderlands between *el fil* and the factory. They may work in a factory, but the factory is embedded with *el fil*. For employment purposes, the government classifies them as industrial, unionized and legal workers, yet, they share a class, citizenship, racial, and ethnic background with undocumented farm laborers.

This chapter illustrates how *el fil* functions in everyday life to structure precarious stability. In this sense, *el fil* as a social space is equally important as its physical presence in the Salinas Valley. This mean that the physical landscape, the literal fields in the Valley, hold more than crops: they hold stories of and reminders for bagged salad workers. These workers may have forsaken the fields in terms of their employment, but their experiences from *el fil* travel with them into the factory. This has implications for how they rationalize labor precarity and labor stability as bagged salad workers. In other words, el fil helps define whether something is precarious or stable. For example, as one worker explained in an interview, one of the

benefits of working at Miracle Vegetable is that she now has dining tables and a microwave to use during her lunch break. Most people would likely not name a dining table and microwave as features of a good job, but this employee mentioned this when I asked her why she felt the factory was a better than *el fil*. "In the fields," she explained, "we sit on the dirt to eat our food if we don't have a car." Understanding these types of lived experiences between the field and the factory, and between precarity and stability, is the focus of this chapter.

My main argument throughout this research has been that labor stability and precarious labor reinforce each other. Precarious labor and labor stability may be opposite ends of the labor spectrum, but, particularly in workplaces such as bagged salad factories in the Salinas Valley, opposites attract. I define *precarious stability* as surviving paycheck to paycheck, working at a (self-described) good job, *and* never achieving true economic security. This chapter focuses on the everyday examples of precarious stability. How does *el fil* shape precarious stability? How does *el fil*, its presence of as a physical and social space, function through the lives of bagged salad workers? What is the quotidian character of precarious stability that workers experience?

In recent years, labor studies in the social sciences have given greater attention to the rise and consequences of precarious labor. Prominent researchers have focused on the structural causes of precarious labor and how they impact contemporary workers (Kalleberg 200 & 2011; Standing 2011 & 2014). More recently, scholars have also begun to challenge the narrow focus on labor in the

Global North that precarious labor studies developed through. Researchers have expanded the foci to account for the lived experiences of people affected by precarious labor in the Global South and through intersectional experiences (Braga 2016; Mosoeta, Stillerman, and Tilly 2016; Paret and Gleeson 2016; Scully 2016). However, there has been no theorizing on how stability is a component of precarious labor. *I argue that precarious labor can reproduce itself in part because some individuals experience it as form of stability*. The crucial point is to understand precarious labor from the perspective of subjects that crisscross those spaces between precarity and stability on a daily basis.

Borderlands theory offers a framework to analyze the spaces between lived experiences and structural forces. While social science research has given attention to boundaries that develop between groups (Lamont and Virag 2002; De Genova 2005; Ribas 2016), Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands theory is more applicable for individuals constantly crossing borders/boundaries. Borders between the field and the factory have been erected, but bagged salad workers cross those borders daily. Furthermore, these borders go beyond the dichotomy of fields and factories. The fields and the factories are also signifiers of social borders. While undocumented laborers and exploitative labor practices are features highly associated with the fields, unionization and legal work status denote greater security when they are features of manufacturing employment. Thus, the experiences of bagged salad workers are located between the field and the factory, regardless of the fact that their workplace is a factory. I utilize borderlands theory in this analysis since an incessant crossing of borders, rather than

the separation of individuals through boundaries, is fundamental to precarious stability and bagged salad workers.

Two concepts of borderlands theory are particularly useful for this analysis. First, Anzaldúa argues that mestiza Mexicans, who were the focus of her original borderlands formulation, are in continuous state of *nepantilism*. Nepantilism, an Aztec word that means "torn between ways," is the product of social, cultural, and spiritual transfers from one group to another. Anzaldúa was investigating how the experiences of mestiza Mexicans are shaped by a fusion of indigenous and European cultures. Because of this merging of worlds, mestizas cross psychological borders as they develop a conscious of themselves and their surroundings. Anzaldúa also advances the *la facultad*, which is similar to having a sixth sense that people develop when they are wise to the ways of their world. As Anzaldúa states,

> *La facultad* is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing' a quick perception arrived without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide. The one processing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world (1987: 60).

In my analysis, bagged salad workers utilize *la facultad* to assess precarity and stability in their employment. *El fil* – symbolized by their experiences of working in and living around it – provides a sense of comparison between worlds. Anzaldúa went from theorizing the borderlands between indigenous and European social worlds, to the borderlands between the United States and Mexico. She also treated borders as mutable rather than firmly set. I follow Anzaldúa by keeping the focus on the merger

between industrial and agricultural social worlds and the diversity within Mexican communities in the United States.

Specifically, I examine how current experiences in the factory are shaped by life in *el fil*. "Life in *el fil"* concurrently represents the past lives of bagged salad workers as undocumented farm laborers, and their current lives as legal residents and unionized factory workers. As such, my approach emphasizes *el fil* as both a physical space and social history. In essence, *el fil* is a signifier for the interaction between history and biography, as C. Wright Mill famously explained in his articulation of the sociological imagination.

The chapter is divided into two parts. First, I analyze how *el fil* is embedded in the factory and helps establish a sense of community. I accomplish this analysis by focusing on how workers themselves create the borderlands between the fields and the factory through everyday conversations. I argue that *el fil* mediates the experiences of precarious stability. In addition to labor and employment relations, I pay particular attention to the language that bagged salad workers use. As Anzaldúa argues, Chicanos in the borderlands established their own language, Chicano Spanish. This is a "living language" that sprung out of Chicanos' necessity for an identity as distinct people (Anzaldúa 1987). The language of *el fil* is similar to Anzaldúa's description of Chicano Spanish. Both populations, Chicanos and bagged salad workers, take existing languages, mix them, and establish a new language that is reflective of their identity as a community. In this case, the language speaks to *a farm worker identity for factory workers*. While the majority of people that participated in

this study are Mexican migrants, I also include the voices of Mexican Americans to highlight the borderlands that members of the bagged salad community construct. The second part of the chapter underscores workers' quotidian experiences. I focus on work, labor, and employment relations that bagged salad workers confront each day. I demonstrate how erratic workday schedules and working inside the factory are anchored by *el fil*. This section reveals how workers make stability out of the precarity imposed on them by the industry and their employer. The chapter relies on data collected through a workplace ethnography, an ethnography of the community, and interviews. This combination allows me to compare workers' experiences as explained by them to my own observations in the workplace, their homes, and the community.

EL FIL: NEW FRAME OF REFERENCE

> It is only when she is on the other side and the shell cracks open and the lid from her eyes lifts that she sees things in a different perspective. It is only then that she makes the connections, formulates insights (Anzaldúa 2007: 71).

Spanish speakers in the Salinas Valley, whether newly arrived migrants or Mexican Americans, refer to farm work and the surrounding agricultural fields as *el fil.* In my conversations with community members about labor and work, no phrase was more ubiquitous or powerful than *el fil*. Immigration scholars have established that migrants develop a dual frame of reference to access their employment and labor market experiences (Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This duality is grounded in comparisons between job options in the home country and in the country

of destination, so a "bad job" for a citizen worker may actually be a "good job" for a migrant worker. While the topic of life in Mexico and family members left behind came up occasionally, bagged salad workers overwhelmingly treated *el fil* as the point of departure for their labor experiences. They spoke of their labor, themselves, and families through conceptualizations *el fil*, such as wanting to give their children a better chance at life by finding work outside way *el fil*.

A key reason why *el fil* plays a prominent role in the lives of bagged salad workers is due to the fact that most of them have permanently settled in the Salinas Valley. An interview with Teresa Mendoza illustrates this point. Teresa opened her front door a few minutes after we completed our third (recorded) interview. She notified the children she was babysitting that their mother had arrived. Teresa gathered the children's belongings shortly after greeting her neighbor from the apartment complex, Yolanda, a farm worker who had just finished her workday. Teresa asked Yolanda how the day went, to which Yolanda responded, "you already know." After closing the door, Teresa turned to me saying, "Pa que veas, esas si son chingas. [See, that's hard labor for you.]" Now it was Teresa's turn to get ready for work at Miracle Vegetable.

This scene encapsulates the relationship between bagged salad workers and *el fil*. In addition to being former farm laborers themselves, bagged salad workers continue to live next to farm laborers, they develop friendships with them, and share a sense of community based on social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and economic similarities. Both Teresa and Yolanda live in an apartment complex that accepts Section 8 housing

vouchers, which is indicative of the socio-economic position they share. However, Teresa demarcates the differences between her and Yolanda through wage-labor relations in the factory and *el fil*, respectively. Teresa does not believe her job is physically demanding because she remembers her time as a farm worker and continues to interact with farm working friends like Yolanda.

It becomes evident that work in the factory is physically taxing once the comparison with farm work is eliminated. This was made clear in conversations with people and observations at work. Women frequently described themselves as being *madriada,* while men sometimes used the word *jodido* [both words mean "beaten" or "beat up"]. I sat with Teresa one Saturday night when our breaks coincided and asked how she was doing. "Ando bien madriada [I'm really fucked up]," she replied. That expression was repeated throughout my stay at Miracle Vegetable, not just by Teresa, but by many other women as well. Perez, a stacker, talked about being *jodido* during one of our conversations. "Ando jodido, pero ya mero [I'm beat up, but the day is almost done]," he told me. *Ya mero* was another common adage at the factory. The literal translation means "almost," but there was a connotation attached to it that functions as a word of encouragement. This phrase was especially salient during final break, when the workday was almost over. During final break, *ya mero* suggests that a reward, the end of the workday, is quickly approaching. Phrases like these are part of the language in Mexican-majority workplaces, whether that workplace is a factory, fields, or something else. In essence, language is activated to alleviate some of the hardships and tolls that physical labor brings to the bodies of these workers.

People that avoided working in farm labor also situate themselves within narratives of *el fil*. Antonia, a migrant from central Mexico, arrived in the U.S. in 1987 – after her husband petitioned to bring her following the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. "He was up in Pennsylvania at that time," she explained, "I didn't like it over there at all. I couldn't get used to the cold. We had family in Salinas that got him a job in the fields. I started babysitting when we got to Gonzalez [a town in the Salinas Valley]." Antonia started working at Miracle Vegetable in the late 1990s after her children were older. "By that time my husband was working at Miracle Vegetable," she continued, "I didn't want to babysit anymore. I needed something better. It was either Miracle Vegetable or the field." I asked why she considered Miracle Vegetable a good job. "It is the only place around here where I can work because I'm older. They don't discriminate because I'm old," she replied, "If I tried to work in the field, the younger people will say, 'that old lady is slowing us down.' And you know what? They'd be right, especially the ones being paid *por contracto* [piece-rate wages]." Antonia's point is germane for many of the older men and women at Miracle Vegetable. Even though production lines move at a rapid pace, they do not consider it as arduous as work in the fields. They are not hunched down or have to walk long-distances as fields are harvested.

I spoke with a different worker that reinforced the idea that older workers have a difficult time laboring in the fields. Maria Jesus was on vacation from Miracle Vegetable when we met for an interview, but she was working in the fields cutting broccoli because her vacation compensation pay does not include overtime earnings.

In other words, a 40-hour paycheck is not enough for workers who depend on weekly overtime wages to supplement a "regular" workweek paycheck. "It is a lot more tiring now that I'm older," she responded when I asked about working in the fields after more than a decade since her last farm labor job, "I'm on my knees bending down all day."

Maria Jesus' account underscores the essence of precarious stability. On one hand, she has secured benefits like vacation time due to her employment in a unionized factory. That benefit delivers her a 40-hour paycheck during her vacation week. Vacations benefits are practically nonexistent for farm laborers. On the other hand, a paycheck for a regular 40-hour workweek puts Maria Jesus in a precarious economic position because she needs overtime wages to cover her expenses. Overtime is necessary because people like Antonia and Maria Jesus are paid an hourly rate that is only 30 cents above the minimum wage in California, and they live in one of the more expensive areas in the United States. Their situation is also more precarious because they are older workers with few options.

According to other interviewees, overtime pay is one of the main benefits of employment at Miracle Vegetable. In California, workers qualify for overtime after an 8-hour workday and a 40-hour week. Workers at Miracle Vegetable regularly go over the 40-hour threshold since the factory operates six days per week. Antonia proclaimed, "They are really cutting overtime in the fields rights now. They only let them do eight hours. At Miracle Vegetable, they don't care about *el over*. That is why we make better money. Both places [practically] pay minimum wage, but *el over* is

the difference." The newest collective bargaining agreement signed in 2015 gave Antonia and other packers a 25 cent raise, putting their hourly wage at $10.30. A coworker in the shipping department once bragged about a $900 paycheck. He earns a higher hourly wage than packers, but the main reason for such a (relatively) high paycheck were the 30-hours of overtime that he worked that week. However, this economic gains come at a physical cost. A day after this interaction, I observed the same coworker napping during downtime in the department. He also mentioned that he slept through the lunch hour. Most of the people that I asked agreed that they liked to work long hours. The overtime pay premium was the key reason why workers prefer working a long workday. At no point did anyone state that they enjoyed working long hours.

Some interviewees did lament that overtime was mandatory, since Miracle Vegetable is allowed to keep employees on the clock for up to twelve hours without prior notice. Throughout the different departments around the factory, supervisors constantly inquire about workers daily start times to determine how much overtime to assign to them. In other words, employees are never asked if they wanted to work overtime. Instead, supervisors assume that employees are available for overtime. Supervisors inquire about workers' start time with the assumption that they will work overtime if instructed to. As one interview explained, "they [the company/supervisors] say a lot of things about safety. How we need to keep an eye on safety, but they really don't care. There are days when I feel I could faint on the line, or when I'm real hungry because I didn't bring enough food for a twelve-hour day. *Les vale madre*

[they don't care]." There were plenty of days when I felt exhausted or when coworkers were hoping to leave after eight hours to spend time with their families. However, we understood that supervisors had the authority to keep us on the job for up to twelve hours regardless. On one occasion, I nearly fell walking upstairs. On another, I did not realize I was walking on the forklift pathway. Both times I was in the eleventh hour of my workday.

Yet, unionization does bring full-time company employees a semblance of stability regarding the issue of overtime. For example, workers at Miracle Vegetable have the option of leaving due to an illness. The company cannot force an employee into overtime, or to remain at work, once they are notified of the illness. Regardless of this policy, workers stated that they do not want to develop a reputation of skipping out on their fellow coworkers. Throughout the factory, one could hear workers identify themselves as supportive *compañeros* and *compañeras* [partners]. Anyone leaving early would be abandoning his or her coworkers since the work-crew would still be required to complete the full *pedido* [customer orders] for the day. This is no different than what happens in other workplaces, including in the lettuce fields that Thomas (1985) explored a few decades ago.

I included ethnographic data on overtime – its economic significance and the manner in which overtime rules are enforced and experienced – to underline how el fil continues to matter. Overtime is one of the benefits of bagged salad work. On a given week, overtime is the reason why bagged salad workers make more money than farm laborers. California passed a farm worker overtime law in October 2016 which

is scheduled to be gradually implemented through 2022. The law may be economically beneficial for factory workers since farm worker earning are compared to theirs in collective bargaining sessions between companies and labor unions. In terms of precarious stability, overtime fortifies stability because of it augments the worker's weekly earning. However, overtime also buttresses precarity because it forces workers to remain longer on the job even if they have other obligations to attend to, or are in a precarious labor position such as being exhausted or frustrated with longer hours.

Experiences of *el fil* are not universal however. Each person has a different level of ability, intersectional status, and personal relationship with el fil. For example, the five Mexican Americans bagged salad workers that I interviewed, all high school graduates, were paid better than other workers. Their wages were in the $12 to $15/hr. range, compared to $10.30/hr. for women packers and male stackers. Part of the reason for this wage disparity is that Mexican Americans can convert their high school education and English skills into jobs as shipping and receiving clerks, scanners, or quality inspectors. Mexican nationals who speak (mostly limited) English and are better educated also have opportunities to acquire such jobs, but it is an easier transition for Mexican Americans who have been developing the necessary human capital since their youth. James Navarro recalled seeing his parents come home from the fields every day. "They'd come home a few hours after me and my brothers were out of school," he explained, "My oldest brother was in charge of us. One of us would greet them as they got out of the car. We'd take their *morral* [lunch bag] and walk

into the house. It'd be a normal evening, like in any family, but we could hear them talking about how tired they were and about the next bills that were due. I knew I didn't want to be like that." James, like other children of farm workers that I encountered, worked in the fields during the summer. Most of the money he earned went for his school clothes for the upcoming academic year.

All the Mexican Americans that I interviewed referenced *el fil* in our conversations, even as some distinguished themselves from farm laborers. Joe Camacho, a first-generation Mexican American whose personal background in farm work consisted of a few summers harvesting onions, stated that, "When the factory first opened, people were happy to get out of the fields. I mean, they used to be treated like animals, so they were really happy with the move... It's sometimes hard to really get along though. The problem is that they sometimes complain like crybabies about seniority rules." Wilfredo Peña, another Mexican American added, "They [former farm workers] think the old fashioned way… They want to make sure supervisors see them return from break on time, and things like that. We tell them that they should kick back [slow down] but they don't listen." Using a more exploitable workforce to increase the pace of work for all workers was a tactic used in lettuce fields. As Thomas (1985) detailed, undocumented workers accelerated the pace of work for everyone, including legal workers, because a slowdown on their part could lead to job termination (since *mayordomos* could find more undocumented laborers to replace them). Wilfredo's comment speaks about the different conceptualizations of work that U.S. born ethnic Mexicans have in comparison to Mexican nationals that

have spent significant time laboring in agricultural fields and as undocumented migrants. As an HR employee at Miracle Vegetable explained, people born in the U.S. do not work as hard as former farm workers. Essentially, the labor of these former farm laborers influences how everyone is judged in the factory since all workers have to match that effort.

Other Mexican Americans see how farm laborers directly influence the wages of everybody in the area. Ramiro Treviño, a sanitation worker at Miracle Vegetable, has a BA from a local business college was. He was "waiting it out" in bagged salad until he could land a job where his college education mattered. When I explained to him my project, he stated that "I sometimes wish people working in the fields would do more to improve their situation. I don't think they realize how much their wages affect the entire area." I then asked if the job was good. He responded by saying, "It was great when I was a single guy, but my wife and I just had our first baby so now it's more difficult." His comment points to two different explanations for wage earnings. First, local farm workers are often unwilling or unable to fight for higher wages. Second, his earnings are rationalized through the fact that he is a new father and Miracle Vegetable does not offer a living family wage despite being a unionized workplace.

Class factors also merge with notions of *el fil* and inform how people experience work in bagged salad. Flor Nieves arrived to the U.S. in 2006 on a work visa. "I actually had a good education in Mexico," she recalled, "I didn't have to work in the fields like most people here. Right now, my job could pay better, but it's OK."

She added, "If I had a husband like a lot of the women here, I know I could advance my career by going to school. A lot of the women don't do anything with that opportunity [having a working husband]." Flor did find solidarity with her coworkers in other ways though, "I know they have it hard. I've heard of many injustices happening to people here. It's good that we have a union, even though I've never needed it." Flor's statements suggest that being around the fields and amongst former farm laborers can led to paradoxical rationalizations. On one hand, because of her educational background in Mexico and her ability to migrate through legal processes, she feels that the job could pay better. On the other hand, not being paid a fair wage, by her own standards, is juxtaposed to the experiences of farm laborers in the area. This suggests that even migrants that do not match the profile of "undocumented farm laborer" learn about farm labor experiences in the Salinas Valley. That farm labor history reflects on everyone's employment and work experiences in bagged salad.

Other workers used a similar rationale, grounded in *el fil*, to explain whether or not they were being fairly compensated. Sandra Piñeda spent the first forty-five minutes of our interview lambasting her employer's labor practices, but when I asked if she was better off today than as a field worker, she replied "*Si, claro* [Yes, absolutely]." A smile appeared on her face for the first time since she greeted me at the beginning of our interview when she gave this answer. Some interviewees referenced the hourly wages of friends and relatives that were working as farm laborers. "I was making about two dollars [per hour] more than field workers when I started [at Miracle Vegetable] in 2009," explained Julián Estrada, "but now I think I

make less than half a dollar more." Mario Briseño argued that the new contract needed to include a substantial wage increase since field workers are "almost up to $10/hr." Of all interviewees, only one female stated that she would return to the fields *if* she were guaranteed a stable workweek and health care. Hortencia, a worker with eight years of seniority at Miracle Vegetable, was regularly working four hours per day at the time of our interview. She indicated that her hours were cut because the current supervisor did not like her, not because of her performance. "She doesn't like people that don't speak English or were born in Mexico," Hortencia commented. I did not witness incidents of Mexican Americans being critical of Mexican nationals in my workplace ethnography, and only Hortencia mentioned this point in my interviews.

There were a few times when Mexican nationals were critical of Mexican Americans for not being "Mexican" enough. Such criticisms are reflective of citizenship borderlands that Mexican nationals and Mexican American negotiate. For example, the term *pocho* is a common label placed on such Mexican Americans in the factory, even though *pocho* has traditionally been used by Mexicans that never migrate to demean "Americanized Mexicans" that migrated to the United States. For years, the Mexican government treated migrant Mexicans as traitors, thus *pocho* was also questioned the patriotism of emigrant Mexicans (Zavella 2011). However, at least among Mexican migrants that have settled in the Salinas Valley, *pocho* is now used to describe Mexican Americans vis-à-vis Mexican nationals. Part of the reason, based on my conversations with bagged salad workers, is that they have developed a

sense of identity based on being Mexican farm workers in the Salinas Valley. In this set up, Mexican Americans do not have to worry about being "Mexican enough" in Mexico. Instead, they need to be Mexican enough for the Salinas Valley community. Failure to comply will result in being labeled a *pocho*. I, for example, was *not* a *pocho* to my coworkers. Yet, a colleague who shares a similar background with me was regarded as a *pocho*. We were both first-generation Mexican Americans, of similar age, have farm worker parents, and our school districts were less than ten minutes apart. We even listened to the same genres of popular Mexican and U.S. music. However, he spoke Spanish with an English accent, while my conversational Spanish sounded normal for the factory. That language difference was the only reason why he was labeled a *pocho* and I was spared. Being a "normal" Spanish speaker in the factory also shielded me from criticisms when I did not know how to pronounce certain words in Spanish, such as "print." I told my coworkers that I learned how to use computers under English instructions, so we laughed together as they helped me on a case by case basis when I did not know how to say certain things.

Humorous encounters were quite common between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans. Many times, one did not even know realize the nationality of coworkers until a humorous encounter ensued. For example, I used to talk to a coworker solely in Spanish for the first few weeks when I arrived at Miracle Vegetable. I noticed immediately that his Spanish was a little different than mine, but I assumed he as from a specific region in Mexico where that Spanish accent was common. One day, this coworker heard me speak in English with another colleague.

He immediately joked about how he confused me for a "straight up *paisano*." We spoke in English for the first time, and I learned he was actually brought to the U.S. at the age of two, and that he spoke better English than Spanish, which accounted for the "accent" that I noticed. Another one of these encounters occurred in the locker room before our shift began. On a Monday, a coworker was laying down on the bench, complaining about being tired and hung over. One of the Mexican Americans in the group responded, in Spanish, "Hey, I thought only us *cholos* were the lazy ones. I thought *paisanos* were hard-working. You're disgracing all the hard-working *paisas*." Outside of the factory, terms like *paisa* and *paisano* are sometimes used as derogatory terms that Mexican Americans levy against Mexican nationals. The term *cholo*, which means gangster, is sometimes used by Mexican nationals against Mexican Americans. The word functions similar to *pocho*, but it is also indicative of a threat [as in being a gangster]. In the factory, these labels, which normally signify racial difference, are appropriated to establish community through humor.

For the most part, race was not a factor in interactions between bagged salad workers, but it was present when they discussed other groups that did not have a major presence in the factory. The reason, I believe, is that practically all workers on the Miracle Vegetable shop-floor, whether Mexican nationals or Mexican Americans, are of mestizo/a descent. I would in fact ask interviewees if any indigenous Mexicans worked in the factory. Only one person knew about an employee from the state of Oaxaca, though it is not clear if the person was indigenous. Many people in the Salinas Valley synonymize people form Oaxaca with indigenous people. In

conversations and interviewees with workers, derogatory terms like *Oaxacos* or *Oaxaquillos* were occasionally used. One person even joked that he left farm labor because there were now too many *Oaxaquillos* in the fields. However, I also met a mestiza from the state of Jalisco that was married to an indigenous Mexican from Oaxaca, so relations between the groups are really more about individual interactions.

Dealing with truck drivers, like I did in my role as a temp worker, was another avenue where racial distinctions were palpable. Any truck driver that was not an ethnic Mexican was usually described in terms of their nationality or perceived ethnicity, such as *el Arabe, el Asiatico*, or *el Filipino*. This was the case even if workers knew the driver's real name. The label of *Americano* was reserved for all white truck drivers, but not for African Americans. In fact, only Mexican nationals or white truck drivers were referred to by their names in conversations amongst shipping dock workers. All others were racially labeled. The one female truck driver that occasionally delivered material or picked up produce was referred to as *la Troquera.*

Race relations such are these are relevant for precarious stability because establishing a sense of community is one of the reasons why people consider the job to be stable. In a way, bagged salad workers are patrolling the borderlands between themselves and those that they perceive to be different. For example, one female coworker made an *Americano* truck driver wait over an hour before she informed him that he needed to go to another dock, where he would have to get in line again. According to her, she did this because he was rude to her. She believed he was being anti-Mexican by yelling at her immediately after he arrived. I was not present during

this interaction, but our work crew laughed about it together later when the coworker told us about what she did. I found it amusing because a Mexican women had power over a white male truck driver in this one particular setting. It may be marginal power relative to overall race relations in the U.S., yet it gave us a sense of community as we talked about the incident. Others were facetious about how we would not let someone disrespect us in our own home. I further elaborate on how a sense of community is crucial for precarious stability in the following chapter.

So far, I have focused on how *el fil* influences social relations inside of Miracle Vegetable's bagged salad factory. *El fil* mediates workers' experiences with labor stability and precarious labor. It also helps establish the borderlands that bagged salad workers at Miracle Vegetable navigate as they contextualize their employment and construct their community. Next I describe how *el fil* influences precarious stability during the average workday. I focus particularly on how *el fil* helps make certain elements of employment, such as erratic workday scheduling and working with chemicals, seem less precarious (or less dangerous/arduous) than they otherwise would be if no comparison with *el fil* existed.

THE WORKDAY

Another facet of precarious stability is highlighted by the actual workday. The workday schedule was especially erratic for second shift workers. From the time I began my interviews in 2011 until early 2016, second-shift workers at Miracle Vegetable did not know their exact start time until noon or later of the given workday.

Saul, a second-shift worker explained, “I call at noon to find out my starting time. On most days the recording will state my start time, but a few times a week it will tell me to call back at 1, 2, 3 or whatever.” Saul has been caught off guard before, having to stop in the middle of an errand because the recording instructs him to report to work immediately. Others explained that their start time is irregular: one day it will be 3 p.m. and the next day it will be at 7 p.m. Lalo, who has worked first-shift, second-shift, and graveyard shift during his tenure at Miracle Vegetable, responded to my inquiry about this erratic schedule by explaining, “At least I know the factory will be in the same place each day. When I worked in the fields we’d sometimes drive 100 miles to a ranch. And they don’t pay us for driving between ranches.” Unlike farm laborers, bagged salad workers are also guaranteed four hours of paid employment once they arrive at the factory. Work schedules in bagged salad, much like farm agriculture, are based on customer orders, which fluctuate daily. This situation was partially ameliorated in early 2016 when second-shift workers were able to negotiate a 24-hour advance notice on their start time.

Having an erratic workweek schedule is one of the staples of precarious labor relations, but I did not truly grasp how chaotic this was until I worked at Miracle Vegetable. The character of erratic scheduling is even more precarious when over a hundred employees are coming in at the same time. For starters, the parking lot is full since work crews are still inside winding down their shift. After securing a parking spot, you have to pick up your safety equipment, which includes a helmet, glasses, hairnet, ear plug, and (sometimes) a safety vest. After putting everything on, you are

required to clock in seven minutes *before* your shift starts. Workers must clock in seven minutes in order to participate in warmup exercises and stretches, which are mandatory, meaning that you are not allowed into the shop-floor until you complete your warm up exercises. (And there is a person with a clipboard checking off people's names and eyeballing people not participating in exercises). Workers technically make up those minutes by leaving seven minutes early. However, as Marcos Alonzo stated in an interview, "they sometimes steal those minutes. Or they put up a fight about how you were paid. If any one of us tries to steal even one minute, or we arrive one minute late, I guarantee you they'll come after us. They'll write us a warning, or give us a point."

The scene after the workday can also be described in terms of unpaid labor. Besides not knowing when the workday begins, people do not know the exact time when their shift ends until a minutes before the time comes. This creates logistical issues for people without a car. I often witnessed workers waiting around after their shift had ended, looking for someone going in the same direction as their homes. Some workers would call their rides immediately after work, but then had to wait around until their arrival. This erratic schedule leads to less time spent at home and more time at work, but the time waiting around for a ride is unpaid time spent at the workplace. Workers, however, are accustomed to these arraignments. As one female worker explained, "It's hard with kids, but I its worse for people in the fields. They are farther away, and most of them have to rely on other people driving them around between ranches [where they'd be working] and their house." Farm labor has, in

essence, naturalized the idea of working with an erratic schedule for some.

El fil has also acclimated bagged salad workers to contend with the production elements inside Miracle Vegetable's factory, particularly when it comes to working in cold climates and with chemicals in production. As reviewed in the Introduction, bagged salad must be kept cold and clean throughout the production cycle. The near-freezing temperature in the factory was of particular concern for all interview participants. Juan, when discussing unpleasant aspects about work, stated, "The worst thing is hold cold it is. Sometimes the job might be easy but you have to keep moving because your bones get cold and stiff…I kind of did not like the cold after a while. It started messing with my bones." Employees explained that ice is sometimes spotted in the lettuce before it is cut or washed, and that frost builds around the ventilators inside the building. Miracle provides the worker's safety equipment such as uniform, hard hat, industrial gloves, hair net, breathing mask, and ear plugs. However, like in agriculture, each worker is responsible for their own protection from the climate, whether it be heat, rain, cold, and so on. One employee explained that the only area in the plant where it is not cold. "The only area that is not cold is where they make the boxes," she stated, "there it is real hot, and there is a lot of dust. That's why a lot of people don't like it there, because there's lots of dust on the boxes…and they [the workers] are hurried."

I experienced the intricacies of the near-freezing temperature during my first month at Miracle Vegetable. Before I even stepped into the factory, the supervisor advised me to wear warm clothes, but not to "overdo" it because I would be too warm.

It took me about five to six weeks to get the right combination of clothing layers where I would neither be too warm or too cold. I ended up with an industrial coverall, a thermo long-sleeve shirt and underpants, a sweater, and single socks. I originally started with double-socks but my feet would perspire too much. The sweat would quickly dampen my socks. With the freezing temperature, the socks would be get extremely cold. I even began to carry an extra pair of socks in case the ones I wore got to dampened. I had heard from interviewees that doing physical labor warded off the cold, but I really appreciated that sentiment when I was in the factory with them. There were moments when I would head back to the break room sweating through my clothes because of how quickly pallets arrived in our area. Additionally, it took me a couple of weeks to "learn how to breath" in the factory. At first, my safety glasses would fog up whenever I took a deep breath. I eventually learned to "control" my breathing by doing it not too deep and not too quick. I was able to prevent my safety glasses from hazing up after that. Having never worked in the fields like my coworkers, I did not have a frame of reference of *el fil* like they did. They compared these experiences with working under extreme heat, in heavy wind, which the Salinas Valley is known for, or in rain, so perhaps it was not as bad for them as I experienced it.

In addition to the cold temperature inside the factory, the application of chemicals, like in agriculture, is also part of bagged salad manufacturing. Yesenia explained the company's chlorine wash system as felt through her body. "We spend the majority of time sick with allergies and things like that because of the cold," she

proclaimed, "Apart from the cold, I also think it is because of the chemicals that they use like *cloro* and all that. That affects our health. We are always breathing the chemicals they use to clean, to kill the bacteria and all that. I think the cold and the chemicals make us sick." While I was isolated from the area where lettuce is washed with chlorine, I regularly encountered workers stepping outside of that area with red, watery eyes and irritated noses. They would spend a few minutes sneezing out the chemicals and cleaning their eyes at the cleansing station before heading into the break room. Here we see how the chlorine washing treatment, which rids the product of foodborne illnesses and ensures a two-week shelf-life, affects people working with the chemicals. Though their claims may not be substantiated by research, more than a few individuals that I spoke with also believe that breathing in chlorine chemicals causes cancer. Several of their coworkers have passed away due to lung cancer in recent years. While I was at the factory, one person, a retired employee passed away from cancer and another was diagnosed. That particular employee actually showed up to work on the day he was diagnosed. There were others as well, but I only heard stories about them. Whether true or not, the perception that many have is that working with chlorine effects their health.

When these labor issues are examined within the history of the Salinas Valley, we can better see how a shared agricultural background is part of the current relationship between Miracle Vegetable and its workers. In the fields, agricultural companies are required to provide basic protections like water and shade so workers can better deal with extreme heat. Companies are also supposed to train farm workers

on the dangers of working around pesticides and chemicals. However, because employers do not always comply with such requirements and because employees fear retribution for reporting violations, the worker's bodily ability to deal with the production chemicals may ultimately determine if they can continue in agricultural employment. The same situation exists inside the bagged salad processing factory. Raul Perez, for example, left the company because, as he stated in an interview, his body could not deal with the cold temperature inside the plant any longer. In essence, the onus is on the worker to protect themselves from the elements of production, such as cold temperatures and fast-moving lines. The former farm workers that I encountered are accustomed to having the onus placed on them, so they buy safety equipment that, in other industries or companies, are part of the work equipment provided to them.

At Miracle Vegetable, even minor supplies were not always provided to workers on the shop-floor. Forklift drivers, for example, brought their own pens from home. *Forkliperos* were sometimes tasked with tracking pallets or amounts coming from specific lines, etc., so they required a pen and paper to keep a running tally. Several *forkliperos* asked me on multiple occasions if I had an extra pen because their supervisor or *mayordomo* did not want to provide one. On my first day of work, the supervisor that walked me to my work station asked the people in the receiving office if there were any pens so I could get started (I needed the pen to takes notes about my job responsibilities). When they said there were no extra ones around, he gave me his pen. "Take care of it," he said when he handed it over. I thought it was a joke, as in

I'm supposed to take care of a dumb pen. I ended up taking the pen with me to my first break, where I forgot it on the table. I thought it was no problem, since I worked part-time inside the shipping and receiving office. When I told my coworker, who was training me about the job, she said that I would have to wait until the mayordomo came back into the office. After we notified him that I needed a pen to take notes, he walked to the office area and pick one up for me. A few other coworkers in the area later told me to make sure I do not lose my pens because the mayordomos or supervisors will think I am irresponsible. "*Plumas* [pens] have a way of walking away from here," one person joked. Later in the day, my trainer-coworker told me to buy a notebook or binder because I would need one to track all the complicated steps required to make shipments. Such stories about office supplies may seem marginal in terms of precarious labor, but they are reflective of labor relations between Miracle Vegetable and bagged salad workers. They also help demonstrate how management brings norms of *el fil* into the factory.

CONCLUSION

When Miracle Vegetable opened its bagged salad factory in the mid1990s, removing cores from freshly picked lettuce was the first task on the assembly line. About a hundred workers lined both sides of the conveyor belt as lettuce rolled by. Several interviewees were employed at the factory during that time. Their long-term employment at the factory helps illustrate the character of precarious stability from a micro-level perspective, but it also speaks about the macro-level relations between

farms and factories, farm laborers and industrial workers, nonunion and union workplaces, and undocumented migrants and authorized workers. Employees at Miracle Vegetable no longer remove lettuce cores since the task has been assigned to farm workers who harvest the lettuce. In other words, Miracle Vegetable cut the costs of removing lettuce cores by using farm laborers rather than unionized factory workers. In previous eras, lettuce agribusiness firms brought Braceros to replace domestic workers and shifted lettuce-packing tasks from unionized packing sheds to those Braceros (Glass 1966; Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Mitchell 2012; Thomas 1985). The complexity of bagged salad manufacturing, which requires high-pressure cutting, chorine washing, drying equipment, mixing, and vacuum-sealing bags, does not give companies the liberty to produce the commodity solely in the fields. They must utilize factories for production. As a response, bagged salad companies have brought the social system of labor from the fields, or *el fil*, into the factory. Bagged salad workers, through their background as former undocumented farm laborers, are part of that process. *Precarious stability* is an outcome of this social system.

Precarious stability was ultimately formed through a convergence of social forces. Bagged salad workers began their employment careers in the United States as undocumented farm workers. They managed to gain legal status due to opportunities such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. The moment when bagged salad factories surfaced in the mid1990s coincided with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which ignited an upsurge of migration from

Southern Mexico to the Salinas Valley. Newly arrived indigenous Mexican migrants would replenish existing labor supply structures in Salinas Valley agriculture. Companies like Miracle Vegetable were then able to move legal status farm workers into their new factories. However, bagged salad workers were unable to divorce themselves from longstanding labor relations in California agriculture even as they secured legalization, unionization, and industrial employment. Instead, they found themselves in a system described here as *precarious stability*.

Having a background in farm labor and/or living in a farm working community is central to understanding this version of *precarious stability*. In the Salinas Valley, *el fil* permeates the experiences of people in the area. Most bagged salad workers have labored in *el fil*, but even those who avoided working in it identify with its meaning. Industrial and unionized labor in bagged salad can, therefore, only be understood through its relationship with agriculture. With *el fil* as a frame of reference, workers in bagged salad do not perceive the work to be as difficult and instead view their employment in terms of the stability it delivers.

Workers in bagged salad share many qualities that are both consistent with and in contrast to *the precariat*. Standing (2014) argues that there are variations of the precariat class and that it is too simplistic to treat them as only victims. This is true of bagged salad workers, however, they also differ from Standing's conceptualization of the precariat class. Unlike other firms in the era of globalization, bagged salad companies like Miracle Vegetable cannot easily relocate production facilities. The Salinas Valley is one of the leading lettuce producing regions in the world, so

companies must remain locally. This creates stability for workers since they attain year-round employment. Workers instead suffer from too much work because of forced overtime. They also have benefits like vacation, pensions, and healthcare that the precariat lacks. However, the benefits are themselves precarious. Standing (2011; 2014) further suggests that the precariat lacks an occupational identity and has a low probability for social mobility. Bagged salad workers, though, *make* an occupational identity for themselves and achieve social mobility in relation to farm laborers. In other words, their version of social mobility and occupational identity is not solely defined by outside forces. Workers themselves create social mobility and their occupational identity within their own community. Having a break room with dining tables and microwave may not seem like relevant variables in an analysis of social mobility, but those are important for people who used to eat their unheated lunch while sitting on dirt. That is one of the perks of being a former farm laborers turned factory worker.

In the next chapter, I highlight how a Mexican ethnic community is formed at the workplace. Thus, the workplace is also a social space where Mexican ethnicity is expressed daily. Expressions of ethnicity, in turn, lead to labor solidarity. Workers activate their Mexican farm working community to challenge indignities and create networks of support for coworkers in need.

Chapter 5: Mexicans at Work

INTRODUCTION

"*La XEW- esa es La Voz de la America Latina aye en el DF* [The XEW, that's "The Voice of Latin America" back in Mexico City]," Doña Mari told me as she saw the paperwork for Miracle Vegetable shipping order 94XEW. "*Ese rato mire la XEQ, esa era otra estacion* [I saw XEQ earlier, that's another radio station,[16]" she continued. Doña Mari and I were working together for the past month, but this was the first time I learned something about her personally. Most of the time we were in a rush, going from order to order. Production was slower than usual this day, so we talked about family, music, and television. I learned that Doña Mari was born and raised in Mexico City. She migrated to the Salinas Valley after marrying. Her husband's family is originally from Michoacán, but they moved to Mexico City in the mid1970s. A relative from her husband's extended family, who remained in Michoacán before migrating to the United States, invited them to live in the Salinas Valley in 1981.

If working in Salinas Valley agricultural fields was an adjustment for rural people, it was likely more of a shock for Doña Mari, who lived in one of the world's largest cities. "*Uuuuh, era una chinga* [it was a struggle]," she told me in an interview a few months later. However, being surrounded by a Mexican community eased Doña

[16] I paraphrase conversations taking place during my workplace ethnography throughout this chapter. Quotes may not be exact, but they capture the spirit of conversations.

Mari's transition into a daily farm worker routine. "*Much se sufre en este trajbajo, pero tambien esta bueno andar con raza* [There's lots of suffering in this job, but we have our own community]," she stated. As a *chilanga*, which is the feminized version of a nickname given to people from Mexico City, she could have been alienated from the Mexican community that developed in the Salinas Valley due to the rural-urban divide. But other than occasional joking and teasing about her *chilanga* identity, Doña Mari, who has no problem responding with puns of her own, was accepted by the ethnic and farm labor community in the Salinas Valley.

This chapter is an analysis of the work culture at Miracle Vegetable. I argue that bagged salad workers have a work culture that embodies a keen sense of ethnic and labor solidarity. In other words, ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each other at Miracle Vegetable. I build on Fantasia's (1988) conceptualized of "cultures of solidarity" by examining labor organizing activities that occurred at Miracle Vegetable while the company and labor union negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement. As Fantasia details,

> Because institutionalized trade unionism has largely become a party to the overall structure, my 'cultures of solidarity' are not conterminous to unions. Cultures of solidarity are more or less bounded groupings that may or may not develop a clear organizational identity and structure, but represent the active expression of worker solidarity within an industrial system and a society hostile to it. They are neither ideas of solidarity in the abstract nor bureaucratic trade union activity,

> but cultural formations that arise in conflict, creating and sustaining solidarity in opposition to the dominant structure (1988: 19).

"Cultures of solidary" breaks from Marxist analyses that explain worker solidarity through class consciousness or dismiss a lack of solidary as false consciousness. In contrast, "cultures of solidarity" represent "a social encasement for the expression of working-class solidarity, and emergent cultural form embodying the values, practices, and institutional manifestations of mutuality" (Fantasia 1988: 25). Thus, cultures of solidarity are historically situated moments.

For bagged salad workers at Miracle Vegetable, ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each other. As argued in earlier chapters, the Salinas Valley's Mexican community grew out of a convergence of hometown networks. The amalgamation of social networks from various areas helped establish a farm worker and Mexican identity that the community embraced. Doña Mari's account in the opening paragraph underscores how the Mexican community in the Salinas Valley made her transition into farm labor more bearable. Once she became a member of the Salinas Valley's Mexican community, Doña Mari was guided into a job at the Miracle Vegetable factory by one of her new acquaintances. In other words, ethnic solidarity on the farm delivered Doña Mari greater labor stability by providing her a pathway into the bagged salad factory.

As such, it is necessary to understand how work cultures shape worker communities and vice versa. Burawoy (1979) examines work culture through his analysis of worker consent and the labor process at Allied Corporation. The piece-rate

earning arrangement compels workers to exceed production quotas. While the company profits because production quotas are reached, workers also benefit because the excess production is used to enhance their labor stability. For example, workers only hand in the necessary pieces to reach their individual quota, but store the remainder to use at a later date. The game of "making out," as labeled by Burawoy, is a product of the worker community that developed at Allied Corporation. Yet, Burawoy's focus on predominately white men in an industrial setting during the 1970s may not be indicative of the workplace experiences of bagged salad workers today.

Other studies about work culture focus on the experiences of Latina/o workers. Zavella's (1987) research of cannery women workers in the Santa Clara Valley is the closest match to this study of bagged salad factory workers due to the similarities between workforces. Her study explores how the Mexican community in the Santa Clara Valley shapes work experiences in canneries. Zavella argues that work culture in canneries is organized around two different types of social networks. Work-based networks socialize women into factory culture, and work-related networks operate outside of the workplace by providing opportunities and resources to women workers. Zavella also addresses how Mexican and Chicana women establish an ethnic and work identity in relation to other social groups in the factory (e.g. men and white women). Ribas (2015), in her study of Latina/o workers at a meat processing factory in North Carolina, examines how race is reproduced at the workplace. She pays particular attention to the way in which whiteness shapes racial relations between

Latina/os and Blacks. This is true even when whites are not present in interactions between the two groups. Though there is diversity with the Latino/a worker population, including diversity of citizenship status and nationality, Latinos mostly perceive Blacks as their main impediment towards advancement (e.g. getting better jobs in the factory).

Burawoy (1979), Zavella (1987), and Ribas (2015) highlight how solidarity has different meanings across time and place. Male workers at Allied Corporation created a culture that relied on the productivity of each other (Burawoy 1979). For Zavella, Mexican ethnicity and a feminized class-consciousness created networks of support inside and outside the workplace. Mexican identity was strong in Santa Clara by the 1980s, but a Latina/o national identity had yet to achieve the political, social, or cultural impact of today. Nearly thirty years after Zavella (1987), Ribas (2015) examined a moment when Latino ethnicity was stronger nationally. Ribas also focused on an area, North Carolina, considered a "nontraditional" destination for Latino migrants. When Latinos first arrived in communities across the Southern U.S., they were brought by employers and social networks specifically for farm labor. Farm workers were not the focus of Ribas' study, but farm labor communities in localities across the Southern U.S. nevertheless helped Latina/os grow as a group in the region.

Literature on work culture among California farm laborers highlights how "cultures of solidarity" have operated historically in the state. For example, the Japanese Mexican Labor Association is the first known farm worker labor union in history (Almaguer 1993). The union ran a successful campaign against sugar beet

farm owners in Oxnard, CA during 1903. Yet, when Oklahomans and Blacks arrived to work in California farms after the Dust Bowl, only Blacks established a class-based solidarity with Mexican farm workers (Goldschmidt 1978). Solidarity developed between the two because Blacks and Mexicans lived in the same neighborhoods and agricultural camps. Conversely, White farm workers isolated themselves from both groups, and felt a greater sense of solidarity with White farm owners. Additionally, the United Farm Workers, the most successful farm labor union in history, was founded on a partnership between Filipinos and Mexicans (Bardacke 2011; Garcia 2012). In the Salinas Valley, Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans also had to negotiate their solidarity (Flores 2016). In essence, sharing an ethnic background did not produce solidarity between Mexican migrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Instead, the groups created a Mexican community by fighting injustices that were affecting both groups. These examples underscore how cultures of solidarity existed in California and the Salinas Valley before bagged salad factories arrived.

The rest of this chapter unpacks the culture of solidarity at Miracle Vegetable. I argue that ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each other. Data comes from workplace observations, participatory-observations, and follow-up interviews with employees at Miracle Vegetable. The ethnic solidarity that workers exhibit occurs in everyday activities. These quotidian acts develop a strong sense of community between workers. Thus, when labor solidarity is needed, workers, already having a deep sense of ethnic solidarity, are able to active it. I focus on a campaign that workers initiated as the company negotiated a new contract with the union. In the

first section of the findings, I describe how ethnic solidarity is established through actions inside and outside the workplace. I focus on humorous encounters, celebrations, and comradery that workers participate in. In the second section, I illustrate how precarity compels workers to activate their labor solidarity. Workers organized a campaign to pressure Miracle Vegetable as the union negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement. The campaign occurred while I conducted my workplace ethnography, and it demonstrates how ethnic and labor solidarity reinforce each other. In the process, social inequalities are reproduced even as workers make small gains.

MEANING MAKING AT WORK

> It crossed my mind to walk away. I felt dizzy, tired, and some weird signals were coming from my body. I've been exhausted before but this is different. Then I went inside and talked with my coworkers. I couldn't believe I considered quitting. Don Fernando was hoping to go home early for a doctor's appointment tomorrow. He wasn't leaving until the orders were shipped. With me gone, it would take longer. Ray is also getting scrutinized by the higher ups. His reputation as our crew leader is getting challenged each day, particularly by the production supervisors. If I leave, he'll be blamed for any shipping errors my replacement makes … Lorenzo invited me to his wedding today…. These are the reasons why I keep working. My job is three weeks from

> ending. I worked too hard for my reputation to just quit. I don't care what others think, but I do care what my crew thinks (Field notes from 6/12/2015).

One does not become part of the bagged salad worker community by being a resident of the Salinas Valley, an ethnic Mexican, or an employee at Miracle Vegetable. In fact, incumbent workers, especially those with seniority, ignore new workers unless they are training them. New worker training is straight forward, with no time devoted to "getting to know" each other. The pace of production is the main reasons why incumbent workers have little time to mentor new workers. One has to perform his or her job duties so production lines do not stop. In short, the company abhors when workers wait for others to do their job. For example, shipping clerks are questioned whenever forklift drivers are idle. Supervisors ask clerks if there are any orders in progress. The implication of the question is that either clerks are working slow or forklift drivers were wasting time. By asking if orders are pending, the supervisor or crew leader can figure out who is at fault for the idleness. How does labor and ethnic solidarity emerge through meaning making in a fast-paced work environment and in a labor system that matches workers against each other?

There are two main avenues to meaning making at Miracle Vegetable: 1) daily work-related interactions that occur within the production process, and 2) events in the break room that lead to a greater sense of community. Through both avenues, workers earn respect and acceptance from their peers. For example, workers can take breaks longer than the allocated fifteen minutes, but only if everyone remains silent

about it and no one abuses the agreement. When I was at Miracle Vegetable, people responded with a "she just went to break a few minutes ago" when supervisors or crew leaders asked about the whereabouts of a particular person. That would give the employee enough time to return without raising suspicion that they took a longer break. In our department, workers figured out the time(s) of day when supervisors were required to attend production meetings. We then planned our breaks and lunches around that meeting. In essence, supervisors would not be present when we left for break or lunch. Consequently, supervisors relied on workers to inform them when someone was talking longer than fifteen or thirty minutes for their break or lunch. Throughout my time at Miracle Vegetable, no one ever informed a supervisor about another person taking longer than the allowed time for break or lunch, even though this occurred daily.

Though no one explained the rules of work directly to me, my understanding of work culture formed through interactions with my immediate colleagues. For example, most of the forklift drivers would not talk with me when I first arrived in the department. Employees in the shipping department joked and conversed with each other, but I was left out. The only people I verbally interacted with were those training me and supervising my work. However, one of the privileges of being a shipping clerk is that we have control over the music played in the shipping office. After three weeks at Miracle Vegetable, I gathered enough courage to play music from my phone when I was left alone in the office. About a minute into the first song, a forklift driver walked in to inquire about a discrepancy in the paperwork Instead of

immediately walking out after I fixed the problem, as he had done many other times when we had similar interactions, the *forklipero* commented about the song. "I was seventeen when Cornelio Reyna [the musician] came out with this song," he told me. We talked for a minute after that. He was mostly interested in my origins. It turned out that my parents came from the same state in Mexico as he did. A few minutes later another *forklipero* came into the office. I was playing a different song from the same genre when he comments, "Don Rafa told me you were in here playing *norteñas*. *Es todo."*[17] Similar scenes repeated themselves throughout the day, both with coworkers and truck drivers that came into the office. Several could not believe I listened to this music. According to them, this was old people music.

An important thing is that I never planned to build rapport with the community through music. In fact, I did not know the type of music that my immediate coworkers liked or disliked. Other shipping clerks played different genres of Mexican music all day. *Forkliperos* and truck drivers would typically walk by without commenting about their music. The *forkliperos* and *troqueros* (truck drivers), all of whom were male, just happened to be fans of the music that I had on my phone. After the initial encounter, coworkers had no problem joking with me and including me in their conversations. That Friday we ordered calzones from a local pizzeria. We took an impromptu break in the office while listening to music. One employee, a female who had transferred from another department two weeks earlier, commented that the supervisor would be upset if he found us eating in the office. "Fuck him,"

[17] The literal translation means "it's everything", but the phrase signifies "that's great."

replied one of the forklift drivers, “as long as we are in here [thereby not on the shop-floor], we’re not doing anything wrong.” I was socialized into work culture through these types of daily occurrences.

A couple of incidents happened in the ensuing weeks that made me appreciate the significance of being an accepted member of the bagged salad community. The first incident involved a transfer order. I was tasked with setting up a transfer shipment going to Miracle Vegetable in Ohio. However, I allowed several pallets that were allocated for the Ohio transfer to be shipped to a local warehouse. The same thing happened to a coworker a week earlier. She was reprimanded with a write-up and verbal warning by the department’s main supervisor. Since I was a temp worker, I figured this slip up would end my workplace ethnography. However, a *mayordomo* that I had bonded with through music and office banter protected me by lying to the main supervisor. The *mayordomo* told the supervisor that there was some confusion between first- and second-shift (I was on second-shift that day). As he explained to the supervisor, first-shift believed that second-shift would handle the shipment, but second-shift believed that the first-shift had already allocated the pallets for the transfer. Our department supervisor never asked me about the shipment and instead handled it directly with his counterparts in Ohio. This same *mayordomo* had been critical about the quality of my work a week earlier. The second incident involved a wrong product label that I stamped on a pallet. Miracle Vegetable did not have that item on the day’s schedule, so a coworker wondered if it was mislabeled. A forklift driver, who was ready to leave for the day, stayed about an hour longer. After he

unloaded the shipment and we fixed the label, he had to reload the truck before he could go home. I went to break right after everything was fixed. The *forklipero* who loaded, unloaded, and reloaded the truck saw me as he was walking out. We had never talked before, partly because he was on first-shift, but he sat down with me for a few minutes. He told me that every shipping clerk had made that same mistake before, and that he and the other forklift drivers thought I was the hardest worker in the group. We talked for about ten minutes in the break room.

There are two critical points about my experiences described above. One, coming from a Mexican ethnic background was essential to gaining acceptance. Though I encountered people from El Salvador, Whites, and other non-Mexicans who were accepted members of the bagged salad community, work culture at Miracle Vegetable is ultimately shaped by Mexican ethnicity. One has to integrate into the work culture, so it is easier if one is coming from a Mexican background. Second, my experiences also underline the need to demonstrate a high-degree of work ethic. It was fine to make mistakes as long as my immediate coworkers saw me working hard. Supervisors may demand that employees work hard to eliminate idleness, but workers themselves give a different meaning hard work. They define a person through his or her work ethic. Thus, keeping up with the pace of work may reduce scrutiny by supervisors and crew leaders, but excelling in the job is also appreciated by your immediate work crew. Bagged salad workers are accustomed to working in fast-paced industries and proud of the work ethic that Mexicans migrants are known for.

My experiences described above speak to the quotidian work-related

interactions that allow solidarity to foster within subgroups, but the break room is the place where the larger community comes together. It is also the space where expressions of Mexican ethnicity occur each day. I typed the following fields notes after my first Saturday at Miracle Vegetable,

> My first Saturday night at the factory. People [interviewees] told me Saturdays were the busiest. They said Saturday work covers Monday orders. Word around the company is that the company does this to make their Sundays [their only day off] miserable… The final few hours were rough on me. I have chills, even now, as I sit in my room after a 12 and ½ hour shift. I can feel my body acting different. The chills won't go away. I can still feel the beard net and hard hat on me as I type on my couch. I'm beginning to wonder if I'll last a few…. What really got me through the day were my breaks, particularly seeing people in the break room. They don't act like if they're miserable, sad to be working in such a tough job. As the song goes, *les gusta vivir de noche* [They like living the night life]**.** Their positivity and comradery pushed me over the edge whenever I felt tired or frustrated. [Teresa Pineda] even gave me an unauthorized tour of the cutting and mixing areas (Saturday April 11th, 2015 4 p.m. to Sunday April 12th 4:30 a.m.).

Workers at Miracle Vegetable walk into the break room immediately after picking up their work equipment from the storeroom, which includes a hair net, beard net if

necessary, gloves, ear plugs, and anything else that is required. They stop at the break room to leave their lunch boxes and say hello to each other after leaving the storeroom. The television in the break room is usually set to *Univision*, the largest Spanish-language channel in the United States. During my tenure at Miracle Vegetable (April 9th to July 5th, 2015), I witnessed people being attentive to soccer games, *novelas* (soap operas), news – including the first reports of a presidential candidate calling this very community rapists and criminals – sitcoms, game shows, and even a pay-per-view boxing fight that the company ordered for the workers.

That boxing fight, centered around *Cinco de Mayo*, provides a window into Mexican ethnicity and workplace culture at Miracle Vegetable. For starters, the company ordered the Floyd Mayweather vs. Manny Pacquiao boxing fight to prevent absenteeism. Several of my colleagues commented that company slowed down production during Mexico's first World Cup game in 2014 because many employees did not show up to work. For the next Mexican game, Miracle Vegetable shutdown production for two hours so workers could watch the game in the break room. This highlight how even if the company capitalizes on leisure activities to placate its workers in the absence of things such as higher wages or better health care, workers nonetheless push the company to make that decision. Thus, holiday parties, birthday celebrations, baby showers, and other events such as company-sponsored barbeques need to be understand as outcomes of worker power.

In addition to the boxing fight, which produced a few yawns in the break room for its lack of action, the event itself was organized around a *Cinco de Mayo*

theme. For instance, there was a salsa contest the day before the fight. A handful of workers, all women, made salsa on their own time, brought it to the break room, and shared it with their coworkers. People tasting the salsas voted on their favorite and the winner received a $50 gift card. A few months later, I interviewed a woman who was at the salsa contest. I told her how I witnessed the festive atmosphere surrounding the salsa contest, but she explained that many of the women were upset because Miracle Vegetable managers came down from their office to participate in the contest. (Their offices are literally above the shop-floor and they use different entrances into the workplace.) In essence, bagged salad factory workers do not consider managers to be members of *their* community. People were upset because managers are not concerned with factory workers. According to my interviewee, a similar thing occurred at a tamale contest that past December. By contrast, workers refrain from making homophobic jokes, which occur quite frequently at least in the shipping department, when they directly impact members of *their* community. For example, there is one openly gay man working at Miracle Vegetable and a female employee with a lesbian daughter. While I heard jokes and puns grounded in homophobia almost daily, no one made such comments when these two individuals were present. Even though workers are informed about discrimination laws at work, they nevertheless change their behavior for members of their community.

Daily interactions like these highlight how workers protect their communal borders within the workplace. Yet, I never saw workers publicly act against outsiders, including the Miracle Vegetable managers at the salsa contest. In fact, bagged salad

workers are generally inclusive. During my second week at the factory, which was a week or so before I felt like a member of the community, one person, who was never on first-name basis with me, brought me a piece of cake. She saw me sitting by myself during a break as her group celebrated a birthday. Even though I had just finished my lunch and was not hungry, I ate the cake out of appreciation.

Break room celebrations and events are also gendered in multiple ways. For example, women set up the tables and make the main dishes for break room gatherings. Women usually prepare the main dishes in their own home, whether they make tamales, enchiladas, pozole, or other Mexican foods. In other words, women do not buy ready-to-eat food from restaurants. They instead take time from their home life to make food for their work community. As Joanna Venegas mentioned in an interview, "Guys don't make food. We tell them to bring sodas or chips, things like that." Joanna also stocks party supplies, including paper plates and plastic utensils, in her van. Women even provide the labor and food to celebrate their special day, Mother's Day. I was at the Mother's Day break room celebration in May 2015. Two male workers sang for the women throughout the night while playing their guitar and accordion. The following Mother's Day in 2016, a mariachi group serenated the break room throughout the workday.

A karaoke machine fills the musical void when live instruments or professional singers are not part of the festivities. Though most workers playfully sing along, the people who imitate their favorite artists or get deep into their performances bring out the most smiles, chants, and cheers. Performers send out

saludos (salutations/shout outs) during their songs. For example, a "*saludo* to the *empacadoras* on Line 20" went out one night as an impersonator performed one of Jenny Rivera's songs. Rivera, the late Mexican *banda* (percussion music) singer, is in fact one of the most popular artists among females at Miracle Vegetable. As one interviewee suggested, "I think the younger ones like her [Rivera] for her *estilo* (style) and her attitude of putting men in their place. We [older women] like her because she was a real person. She was divorced like me. Raised her children by herself like I've had to. She was a pretty *gordita* ("fatty" but with a positive connotation attached to the label)." Based on my observations and interview questions, men did not have a favorite singer like women with Jenny Rivera. Additionally, except for one occasion when a male worker sang a "feminized song" popularized by the Mexican singer Yuri, most songs performed by men were masculinized and accompanied by traditional Mexican music styles such as *norteño, banda,* or *mariachi*. In my time at Miracle Vegetable, I only observed one person sing in English. It was a Filipino employee singing along to Starship's *We Build This City*. Though most people in the break room did not understand the lyrics, the audience clapped and whistled like they normally would for a Spanish song.

Music and celebrations are the norm each Saturday. In fact, only one Saturday during my workplace ethnography lacked a celebration. This particular Saturday had no celebration because a person, who worked in the shipping department, was murdered earlier in week. Instead of a party, workers held a fund raiser for his family. They sold *champurrado* (a Mexican drink reminiscent of hot chocolate) and *bolio*

(bread rolls) in the morning, and hot dogs and nachos during the night-shift. Late in the night, workers who organized the fundraiser left the food and money bag unguarded on a table since they could not be in the break room for too long. Thus, they had faith that their colleagues would pay for the food and not steal the money. I saw about a dozen people put money in the bag as they took the food they paid for. People collecting the money and left over food where in the break room when I walked out that Sunday morning. On a separate occasion that occurred several months after I completed my workplace ethnography, I accompanied Teresa Mendoza as she delivered money to a coworker recovering from surgery. This person was waiting on his disability claim, so workers organized a fundraiser to help him as he waited for his disability insurance. I interviewed the worker during this visit. He never disclosed to me nor discuss with Teresa how much money was raised, but he explained that he would have sold some of his possessions, like furniture, to pay rent had it not been for this help from his *compañero/as* (partners).

ACTIVATING SOLIDARITY: "IMAGINE IF THERE WAS NO UNION"

While having a Mexican ethnic community in the workplace helps workers give meaning to their job, the solidarity it produces can also be activated for labor struggles. When I arrived as a temp worker in April 2015, the collective bargaining agreement at Miracle Vegetable had been expired for six months. I was first made aware of the expired contract during interviews in November 2014. Workers were not allowed to strike because the expired agreement, which was still valid, prevented

them. According to union sources and workers, both sides agreed to a continue with the old contract as they reconciled their differences. This meant that workers were not authorized to strike during negotiations. However, workers used other measures to pressure the company.

The campaign to pressure Miracle Vegetable into signing a new contract was organized around equality with the larger bagged salad workforce in the Salinas Valley. Packaged Salads and Verde Lettuce[18] paid higher wages and offered better benefits to their employees. For example, forklift drivers at Miracle Vegetable make approximately $12/hour, but their counter parts at Packaged Salads earn $14/hour. These two companies, along with Miracle Vegetable, are the three largest bagged salad companies in the Salinas Valley in terms of sales and number of workers. Furthermore, the Teamsters represent workers at both Miracle Vegetable and Packaged Salads. Verde Lettuce workers are represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers. Workers at Miracle Vegetable were asking for wage and benefit parity with these other major bagged salad companies. "*Igualdad con la industria"* [equality with the industry] was the rallying cry brining workers at Miracle Vegetable together during contract negotiations.

With *igualdad con la industria* as an overarching theme, there were three key elements to the campaign pushing Miracle Vegetable into a fairer contract. First, union members held meetings to inform and organize their community. Since I was

[18] Like Miracle Vegetable, I borrow the pseudonym Verde Lettuce from Thomas (1985). Packaged Salads is a pseudonym that I created since this company was not part of Thomas' study.

working ten to twelve hour days during this time, I only attended one such meeting. I gathered information about other meetings at the factory or in follow up interviews, and one informant shared an audio recording of a meeting that she attended. The recording was made available for people unable to attend the meeting. Information meetings actually began earlier in the year, before my workplace ethnography. At these meetings, the focus was on comparing workers in similar positions across the three main bagged salad factories. Facilitators compared health care packages and benefits such as paid sick days and vacation. But the gap between bagged salad employers went beyond sheer numbers. For example, Miracle Vegetable checks on workers who call in sick. The company outsources these "investigations" to a third-party. When workers call in sick, this third-party company calls them to inquire about what they are doing, to check if they visited a doctor, and so on. In the months after the collective bargaining agreement expired, workers noticed that calls were more frequent. This upset them as much as the lack of paid sick days. Hence, the collective bargaining process was also about dignity and respect.

Both dignity and respect were central to the second element of the campaign for a fairer contract. Since workers could not strike, they protested and picketed outside the factory and Miracle Vegetable's corporate headquarters. The day of the first protest occurred during my second week at the factory. I was on the morning shift that day. When I arrived, a police car was stationed outside the parking lot. While the company knew that workers were planning some type of protest, workers made the arrangements one day in advance. People gossiped that a *mayordoma*, who

is antiunion and pro-company, notified Miracle Vegetable management about the protest the night before. I was unable to corroborate this, but people believed it whether true or not. The company's Wi-Fi was also disconnected that day. An internet connection was not necessary for the protest, but one worker, who I interviewed several times since 2011, commented that these are the types of *payasadas* [clownish things] that the company does. He uses the company Wi-Fi on his cell phone during break to save his data usage for when he is home. Because workers are at the factory 50-60 hours per week, having Wi-Fi availability on a day-to-day basis may be viewed as an actual benefit of the job. Nevertheless, workers picketed outside the factory. They created signs during the previous week, so it was about showing up. Morning and night shift workers took turns at the protest line. They congregated outside the parking lot since they could not enter company grounds. Night shift workers protested during the day, while their morning counterparts worked inside the factory. After the morning shift ended, those workers switched from working to protest.

Miracle Vegetable headquarters, located in the city of Salinas, was the next target. For this protest, which occurred a couple of days after the one outside the factory, workers met at the Teamsters union hall in Salinas. The union hall is three miles from Miracle Vegetable headquarters. Approximately one-hundred workers walked the three miles, holding signs demanding equality with the industry and respect for workers. Expect for one Spanish language story which ran on the evening news, the local news media did not cover these events. However, pictures from the

protests made their way into the factory through text messages and Facebook postings. Most of the workers that I spoke with, however, relied on word of mouth for their information.

Workers were also more visibly active in the factory and break room during this period. For example, a group of women workers made a scene after a *mayordomo* offered overtime to temp workers but not union workers. The women yelled to get the attention of the main production supervisor in charge that day. They left after speaking with him, but people inside the factory talked about the scene in the following days. Additionally, workers also left flyers on tables inside the break room. The flyers contained information about negotiations, the union, and the company. In essence, the break room was converted from a space of ethnic solidarity to a space of labor solidarity.

The break room was also essential for the third element of the campaign: countering the anti-union movement. Workers used the term "anti-union" to describe two different positions within their bagged salad worker community at Miracle Vegetable, neither of which was concerned with *removing* the union. Instead, "anti-union" workers were either not satisfied with the direction of negotiations or stood in opposition to union leadership. For example, some individuals, including a forklift driver that I became good friends with, were concerned that a small raise would be irrelevant in the long run. In other words, wage "equality with the industry" was fine, but only as a short-term goal. This group believed that a small hourly raise would be swallowed up by higher deductibles on their health care plan – which actually

occurred when the final contract was agreed to. Workers in certain jobs also wanted more for their position. For instance, machine operated and mechanics wanted better retirement benefits and higher wages for their job classifications. Workers labeled this group as being *contra la union* [against the union] even though they were only against the contract being negotiated. In fact, I knew two people who were active in the protests and part of the *contra la union* group.

The other "anti-union" bloc was against union leadership but not in opposition to union representation. However, outsider forces were a key difference between the anti-leadership and anti-contract factions. In other words, people opposing the direction of the contact were all employees of Miracle Vegetable, but the group challenging union leadership included people that were not bagged salad workers. Workers did not allow these outsider forces to hamper their efforts for a better contract. The anti-leadership bloc was ruthlessly countered. The group was led by three outsiders. Reynaldo Barrios (pseudonym), a former organizer with both the Teamsters and United Farm Workers (UFW), was attempting to replace the current president of the Teamsters. While most people had no knowledge of Reynaldo, rumors began circulating, both verbally and on flyers passed around in the break room, about his alleged infidelities in his marriage, sexual harassment of UFW cofounder Dolores Huerta, and harsh treatment of renters in an apartment complex which he managed. As one anonymous testimony in a flyer stated, "*No olvidaré cuando Reynaldo saco a mi madre y a mi hermano a la calle. Vi como amenazaba a las familias con llevarlas a corte si no se salían de inmediato* [I will not forget when

Reynaldo threw my mother and brother to the street. I saw how he threatened families with court if they did not leave immediately]. That same flyer included the phone number to the Salinas Police Department and asked people not to be afraid if they were victimized by him. A picture of Pinocchio decorated a different flyer left inside the break room, along with the caption, "*No sean títeres mentirosos*" [Don't be lying puppets]. This flyer was critical of Reynaldo and two individuals supporting his efforts to replace the current Teamster's president.

Workers that I interviewed were not necessarily bothered by Reynaldo and the other two individuals, but they were disappointed that one member of their community joined their efforts. Juanita Rico explained, "She [the person] collected signatures from all of us during break. She told me it was to show support a wage increase, better schedules, so we all signed… But then we find out that the form we signed was to throw out [the current Teamster's president]." Juanita added, "She's mad because the union did nothing when Miracle Vegetable fired her husband. But they couldn't do anything because he attacked a *mayordomo*. The *mayordomo* was bleeding." Workers who signed the form filed an incident report with the Teamsters, and the form was never used in any capacity. I was scheduled to interview the employee who instigated this event, but she was never available after this incident. "She sits alone now," continued Juanita, "no one talks to her. We'll work with her if we must, but that's it. It's bad enough already, imagine if there was no union?"

Juanita's question – imagine if there was no union? – is reflective of the overall sentiment that workers at Miracle Vegetable were living through during the

period of protests and negotiations for a new contract. Most conversations that I participated in or overheard usually included a form of that question. In this regard, one can see why Miracle Vegetable employees labeled opposition as *contra la union*. The nuances, whether being against the direction of contract negotiations or disapproving current union leadership, are lost when workers perceive a threat to their stability.

The gains received by Miracle Vegetable workers after the company agreed to a new contract, which pushed their workers' wages and benefits closer to those offered by Packaged Salads and Verde Lettuce, nevertheless did not end precarious labor conditions. Most workers gained a 24-hour notice on start times (though the company can make sudden changes if necessary), a one-dollar increase on hourly wages over three years, and three sick days per year. However, copays and out-of-pocket expenses on their health coverages increased. In fact, one employee who was in a celebratory mood on the day the union announced that the contract passed with over three-quarters of support from workers, asked me to help her calculate whether her children qualified for MediCal. She was able to transfer them into that program, which saved her money compared to the company insurance. Yet, she was still critical of people that were unsatisfied with the new contract. "Its like in an election," she commented to me, "we can argue but once its over we have to accept the results as a team." The experience of being part of a protest, belonging to a union and community of workers, and seeing the company agree to a wage increase are essential for bagged salad workers. However, precarity is reproduced because no collectively

bargained agreement between a union and employer at the local level can produce major structural changes for national labor relations. Conversely, stability is also reproduced within the same process because the gains are marginal when seen through a structural lens.

CONCLUSION

"*Andaba como la Llorona, con el alma en pena recorriendo el mundo* [I used to be like the Crying Lady,[19] with a heavy soul wandering across the world]," said Doña Mari when I asked her to sum up her experience before arriving at Miracle Vegetable. Doña Mari was never a member of the United Farm Workers, but she was one of the most vocal protestors and organizers that confronted Miracle Vegetable. In a way, the Teamsters followed the UFW playbook, though at a smaller scale, of reinforcing ethnic solidarity with labor solidarity, and vise versa. However, this playbook was accessible only because workers established a community beforehand. For people like Doña Mari, who came to the United State as an undocumented migrant to work in farm labor, the experience of fighting against an agricultural juggernaut can be even more rewarding than marginal economic gains.

Solidarity in the bagged salad community was possible for several reasons. The previous chapter focused on the construction of a Mexican farm worker community in the Salinas Valley. I argued that an assemblage of social networks from different places in Mexico converged in the Salinas Valley, allowing a Mexican

[19] *La Llorona* is a pop cultural/mythical figure in Mexico and Latin America. She, as a ghostly figure, wanders from place searching for her dead children.

community to form within the local farm worker community. When bagged salad factories arrived in the 1990s, some members of the farm working community, particularly those with legal residency, moved into the factories. Others followed the track into bagged salad factories in the following years.

In this chapter, I highlight how a Mexican ethnic community functions in the workplace. Because employees of Miracle Vegetable spend much of their time at work, work culture is fundamental to their experiences. While there are opportunities to develop solidarity within the production process, the break room at Miracle Vegetable is the key space for the community to express its Mexican ethnicity. Bagged salad workers use the break room for celebrations, reunions, and fundraisers. They eat, sing, and learn about the lives of each other. Having a space for ethnic solidarity makes the job more bearable. In other words, it is a noneconomic quality of the job. On its own, having a work culture grounded in Mexican ethnicity is valuable for these reasons. However, ethnic solidarity reinforces labor solidarity as well.

Workers at Miracle Vegetable activated their labor solidarity when the company crossed a social border by violating their respect and dignity. Miracle Vegetable and the Teamsters were given an opportunity to work out a new collective bargaining agreement. Once the company demonstrated an unwillingness to support *igualdad con la industria* (equality with the industry), workers marched forward with a campaign. Workers organized information sessions to identify their overarching problem: a lack of equality with other bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley. This became the central rallying cry for the ensuing campaign against the company.

The campaign did not include a formal strike or production shutdown, but it featured picket lines outside the factory and a march through the streets of Salinas before congregating at Miracle Vegetable's local headquarters. Throughout the campaign, which lasted less than a month, workers convinced their colleagues who lacked enthusiasm for their efforts. They also battled outsiders – the anti-union leadership bloc – attempting to drive a wedge between union leadership and rank-and-file members. In the end, workers gained some parity with other bagged salad employees in the area. Yet, social inequalities were reproduced in the process because gains made in the new contract could not address any structural causes of insecurities and inequalities.

The very premise of *igualdad con la industria* was an issue. While gaining parity with other bagged salad workers in the area is a noteworthy accomplishment, that achievement does not move Miracle Vegetable employees into a new income bracket per se. Bagged salad workers continue to be employed in low-wage manufacturing, thus equality within themselves does not ameliorate long-standing social inequalities in society writ large.

However, one cannot dismiss the experience of bagged salad workers fighting for equality. It is likely that Miracle Vegetable and the agricultural industry will not improve their labor practices unless they are pressured by workers and their allies. In this case, workers are a community of socially, culturally, and ethnically similar individuals. They also bring with them supporters from the Salinas Valley and beyond. The Salinas Valley farmworker community is symbolic of years of

migrations and labor struggles. Bagged salad is just the latest chapter in that struggle.

Chapter 6 (Conclusion): *Es La Historia de Siempre* [Always the Same Story]

INTRODUCTION

"*Era un desmadre* [It was mess]," Teresa Mendoza told me a few days after my last day at Miracle Vegetable, "A lot of people did not show up. *Y el pinche supervisor nomas chingando con todos* [And the damn supervisor was just bothering all of us]." She continued, "There were workers absent on every crew, (produce) deliveries arrived late, and the lines stopped a few times." The mess described by Teresa occurred on Saturday July 4th, 2015. I watched the local news that day. Independence Day celebrations across Monterey County were the lead story. However, Miracle Vegetable's factory was in full operation as people enjoyed local beaches, parades, family reunions, and fireworks. This is the case for virtually every holiday at Miracle Vegetable: the factory is in full operation and worker absenteeism is more problematic than usual even though they are paid double-time for holidays. I heard from several people that work on Christmas Eve, later that year, was even worse. Supervisors threatened to fire people if they were absent. They were also on guard against anyone leaving early. One worker was scheduled to pick up his daughter at San Jose International Airport, which is about an hour and a half drive from the factory. The daughter waiting at the airport left a message with the guard at Miracle Vegetable, asking for an update on her father's schedule. A few minutes later, a supervisor returned her call. She was told that her father will be fired if she calls again and that he will be working twelve hours thanks to her call.

This contradictory approach to holidays exemplifies of how bagged salad workers fit within our modern economy. The average American ate approximately three pounds of lettuce in 1985, but today they consume over eleven. Yet, sales of iceberg and romaine lettuce have remained flat over the past decade. Those consumption increases are attributable to the rise of bagged salad. When I began this research in 2011, iceberg lettuce sold for $0.25 per pound, but processed lettuce had a retail value of over $3.00 a pound. By 2018, processed leafy greens will be a $7 billion a year industry (Packaged Facts 2014). The commodity's popularity reflects a move toward healthy eating and working people with less time for meal preparation. Supermarkets, restaurants, and other food service industries are adjusting to consumer demands by carrying more varieties of bagged salad. Bagged salad companies, while still profitable, are involved in an intense competition for shelf space at supermarkets and for the right to be exclusive suppliers.

Bagged salad workers are integral to both the industry's value and modern lifestyles. With the Salinas Valley producing 90 percent of bagged salads sold in the United States, the value of Miracle Vegetable's workers reaches far and wide into society. However, bagged salad workers, along with other food system workers along the bagged salad farm-to-fork chain, experience the brunt of social inequalities and insecurities. In other words, their inequalities and insecurities make it possible for more fortunate individuals to have multiple options of ready-to-eat salads year-round. Processed lettuce and bagged salad will continue to be an essential commodity in the foreseeable future, but workers' (mis)fortunes will continue to be anchored by the

legacy of Salinas Valley lettuce and California farm labor.

Precarious stability, as experienced at Miracle Vegetable, is the living embodiment of that legacy for both employers and workers. On one hand, Miracle Vegetable could make the jobs less precarious through positive incentives and rewards. For example, their employees are still low-wage workers even though they won slight wage increases after the newest collective bargaining agreement. Many workers also reminisce about the early days of Miracle Vegetable when, according to interviewees, management was friendlier and more understanding of its workforce. In fact, interviewees were most animated when discussing Miracle Vegetable's current labor control regime. They understood the need to work together with Miracle Vegetable and make the company successful. However, workers also believed they were being unfairly targeted for business failures and decreased sales that were caused by bad managerial decisions. In essence, the bagged salad sales market, in which buyers exert considerable control over producers, results in employers experiencing precarious stability, though at a different scale than workers. Miracle Vegetable has the capacity to produce a lucrative commodity, but they are unable to control its pricing and have little power against supermarkets. Thus, the company turns to labor in search of higher profit margins.

On the other hand, workers experience precarious stability at a more heighten stage of insecurity. From their perspective, they gained some security by acquiring a full-time, year-round job. Along with their legal residency, the job gives workers the ability to settle in the Salinas Valley. However, a job in bagged salad factories does

not move those workers into a different income bracket. They continue to be in the same socioeconomic position as undocumented farm laborers because bagged salad adds new forms of precarity. For example, working an abundance of overtime hours is great when workers are paid, but it takes a toll of their bodies and prevents them from spending time at home. Workers say they prefer longer workdays, but only because a regular 40-hour workweek paycheck is insufficient. This overtime example is symbolic of how precarity and stability reinforce each other on a day-to-day, week-to-week, and year-to-year basis. Thus, *precarious stability* is ultimately about the reproduction of social inequality.

The value of examining the case of bagged salad workers at Miracle Vegetable through a sociological lens is that it offers insights into how *precarious stability* assists the reproduction of social inequality. Workers cannot abandon the job because it is nevertheless the better of two options, with the other being a return to farm labor. They, and employers like Miracle Vegetable, understand that. With both knowing what farm labor entails, including intense physical labor and a lack of long term security, employers only have to make jobs in bagged salad factories marginally better than jobs in farm labor in order for *this* population to accept them.

However, bagged salad workers are not a docile population blindly accepting a bad job without challenging employers. The key issue is that individuals, even as they gain stability with their employment as bagged salad workers, have been unable to break from a legacy of precarity that began in Salinas Valley lettuce fields. Understanding the process of reproduction that takes place at the borderlands between

Salinas Valley lettuce farms and bagged salad factories is critical because of the rise of labor precariousness across our current society. In the next section, I review the contributions of this research and discuss how each chapter informs the main argument that labor precarity and labor stability reinforce each other.

EXTENDED CASE METHOD

The extended case method is a useful methodological framework for this research because of previous studies have focused on Miracle Vegetable's role as a central figure in Salinas Valley Lettuce since the early 1900s. As detailed by Glass (1966), Friedland, Barton, and Thomas (1981) and Thomas (1985), Miracle Vegetable established a system of labor that began capitalizing on existing social inequalities decades ago. In the process, Miracle Vegetable's labor system helped reproduce the social inequalities. For example, Glass (1966) demonstrates that Braceros were used to eliminate packing-shed unions beginning in the 1940s. Lettuce packing-shed workers were predominately a White female labor force, while Braceros were exclusively Mexican migrant men. Growers, including the founder of Miracle Vegetable, moved packing duties from the factory to the field once the technology of vacuum cooling arrived. Agribusiness profits increase with this move because Braceros were paid a fraction of what packing-shed workers earned. Glass' research highlights the relationship between fields and factories. Growers prefer to use the fields exclusively, but bagged salad production makes factories necessary. As a result, they bring the fields into the factory when they cannot move the factories

into the field.

The scale of food production, including lettuce, has escalated in the decades since the Bracero Program came to an end. Friedland, Barton and Thomas (1981) researched Salinas Valley lettuce more than a decade after Glass (1966). Their research began as a global food system was starting to take shape. Through a commodity systems analysis, the authors highlight the organization of lettuce production in the Salinas Valley, from planting and harvesting to transportation and retail sales. Yet, they were unable to adequately address the topic of labor because of the secretive nature of agribusiness.

Understanding the social system of labor in Salinas Valley lettuce was the focus of Thomas (1985) a few years later. Thomas studied labor in the Salinas Valley lettuce by conducting a workplace ethnography of Miracle Vegetable's lettuce harvesting farms. He uncovered that tasks along the labor processes were assigned to individuals based on statuses of gender and citizenship. For example, women who lived year-round in the Salinas Valley and held legal residency were designated as packers, while undocumented men from Mexico were allocated to cutting jobs. Miracle Vegetable manipulated their social statues of citizenship and gender to establish a highly efficient labor process and maintain great leverage in their negotiations with labor according to Thomas. By the 1980s, there was a belief that processed lettuce represented an avenue into the future of the industry. The technology for bagged salad and the commodity's explosion into American society arrived about a decade after Thomas in the mid1990s.

This research argues that actions in Salinas Valley lettuce farms decades ago influence today's bagged salad factories. Through an ethnographic revisit, I compare gendered labor practices, unionization, and labor control regimes between lettuce and bagged salad. In both cases, the fields and the factory, Miracle Vegetable capitalized on existing social relations (e.g. inequalities based on gender and citizenship) to maximize its control over workers and the labor process. Thus, one of the main reasons why workers are unable to convert their upward social mobility into socioeconomic security is Miracle Vegetable capitalizing on long-standing inequalities. However, "manipulating social relations," as Thomas (1985) described it when he studied how Miracle Vegetable utilized existing social relations to its advantage, does not fully explain why bagged salad workers in the contemporary period continue to be confined to precarious labor/employment/work. They also need to be understood as individuals within a farm working community.

FROM FARM TO FACTORY

A labor market analysis underscoring bagged salad workers' individual migration and farm labor background moved this research forward. Labor market theories of segmentation do not fully account for the experiences of bagged salad workers because they measured jobs through a dichotomy of good or bad, formal or informal, and primary or secondary (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Piore 1979; Peck 1996; McCall 2001 Kalleberg 2008 & 2011). *Dual frame of reference* also falls short as an analytical lens because bagged salad workers compare their factory jobs to farm

labor in the Salinas Valley instead of labor market options in their Mexican communities (Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This underscores a need to better understand the nebulous world of work that bagged salad workers travel.

As an alternative to duel frame of reference and labor market segmentation, I argue that *individualized labor markets* operate within primary, secondary, and segmented labor markets. Individualized labor markets are an analytical lens that focuses on workers giving meaning to their employment experiences across time and space. In this case, workers decide that jobs in bagged salad factories are good because jobs in farm labor, their only other option, are a bad job. Individuals decide which job qualities are important and relevant for their own situation. This does not suggest that bagged salad workers do not recognize the existence of precarious or bad elements in their current employment. I argue that instead of relying on categories of good/bad jobs or primary/secondary labor market sectors, the sociology of work should be focus on nuanced understandings of individuals' rationalizations of their own employment experiences.

Borderlands theory advanced this labor market analysis because the theory is specifically focused on explaining nuanced spheres that individuals cross in everyday life (Anzaldúa 1987; Mezzadra and Nielson 2013; Zavella 2011; Agier 2016). I explore the borderlands between farms and factories in the Salinas Valley by showing a connection between fields and factories. Workers and employers bring their experiences as farm laborers and farm labor managers into the factory. Additionally, bagged salad workers travel the borderlands of citizenship since they go from

undocumented migrants to legal residents and from farm laborers to industrial workers. Living in the Salinas Valley, where they are surrounded by *el fil* makes it impossible to forget their previous life as farm laborers. They also continue to be part of the farm worker community in the Salinas Valley, even as they are classified as industrial workers, because of their proximity to farm worker friends, neighbors, and family members.

PRECARIOUS STABILITY

Demonstrating how labor stability and precarious labor reinforce each other is the key theoretical contribution made by this research. While others have detached precarity from stability in labor studies and the sociology of work (Standing 2011, 2014, 2016; Kalleberg 2009 & 2011), this research focuses on how the two reinforce each other. I define *precarious stability* as surviving paycheck to paycheck while remaining on the same job, but never achieving true socioeconomic security. Bagged salad employees' embeddedness with the Salinas Valley's farm worker community structures how precarious stability operates in their everyday life. For bagged salad workers, a low-wage, year-round, union job in a factory delivers stability because it is the best available job option they have, but it does not deliver security because of the precarious employment and labor practices that enable the industry to flourish. By conducting a borderlands analysis, I demonstrate that bagged salad workers do not see their jobs as solely precarious because of their experiences in the fields. For example, when asked if the job at Miracle Vegetable was difficult, people frequently

stated that it was not as physically demanding as farm labor. Bagged salad jobs were also juxtaposed with farm labor as people described the satisfaction of no longer working under the sun, in the rain and mud, with wind swirling dirt into their faces, and without a break room with dining tables and a microwave.

Virtually all conditions and outcomes associated with precarious stability in bagged salad are entrenched with *el fil*. Even people that avoided working in *el fil* were influenced by it. For instance, U.S. born children of farm workers viewed their employment in bagged salad through their parents' and community's experiences with farm labor. Erratic schedules in bagged salad were also normalized because of the erratic work schedules that these same individuals experienced as farm workers in the past. Farm laborers drive/move from field to field as needed, wait for rain to stop so they can continue working, and are laid off when natural disasters such as freezes and floods ruin crops. They are not compensated for this idle time[20]. These are all examples of how jobs in bagged salad offer more stability than jobs in farm labor. In the end, newly gained stability, even if minor in the larger picture, reinforces precarity and vice versa.

Conceptualizing precarious stability with bagged salad as a case study also offers insights into the rise of precarious labor in society writ large. Mitchell (2012) argues that labor control practices made prominent by agribusiness during the Bracero Program provide a blueprint for the management of labor in other industries.

[20] Some legal residents farm laborers may qualify for unemployment insurance when they are laid off. It depends on factors such as number of hours worked during a given week.

In short, agribusiness excelled at pitting guest workers against citizen workers during the Bracero Program, thereby making labor relations more precarious and less stable for everyone. The growth of temporary staffing agencies, part-time jobs, and erratic scheduling across industries are examples of this phenomenon. Bagged salad as a case study offers details precisely because it is a hybrid commodity involving agriculture and factory processes. The commodity is situated within farms and factories, the borderlands between bagged salad workers and farm laborers, and Miracle Vegetable's dominance in lettuce and bagged salad over the decades. By comparison, it would be more difficult to argue that farm labor practices influence labor relations among low-wage bank tellers or restaurant workers since the services they offer are further away from agricultural manufacturing. Understanding labor relations in bagged salad, therefore, highlights how Mitchell's analysis works. In this case, Miracle Vegetable's expertise in managing migrant workers since the days before Braceros was applied to its factory when bagged salad arrived. Even a labor union in the factory and legal residency protections for its workers has not hampered Miracle Vegetable's labor control regime.

WORK COMMUNITY

Even as power imbalances exist between workers and managers, workers have nevertheless fought Miracle Vegetable to make their jobs in bagged salad more stable and less precarious. Legalization, unionization, and industrialization are tools for social mobility, but no outcome is guaranteed for people who gain them. For example,

having a union job does not guarantee a higher wage compared to nonunion workers in similar occupations and in the same locality. Thus, how bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley react to the precarity they encounter influences the precarious stability that they live through. For example, having a common ethnicity is important for labor relations at Miracle Vegetable because it strengthens the collective labor power that workers can activate against the company. Thus, I also argue that ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each other.

I use data from a protest that occurred while I conducted a workplace ethnography at Miracle Vegetable to demonstrate how ethnic solidarity and labor solidarity reinforce each other. In essence, the workplace at Miracle Vegetable reflects the overall Salinas Valley community. Labor migrants arriving from Mexico formed a community by settling in the area and dominating the local agricultural labor market. Initially, bagged salad workers who arrived from Mexico relied on hometown networks to secure employment. As people became permanent residents of the Salinas Valley, those hometown networks intermingled, creating an ethnic Mexican, farm working community. Miracle Vegetable's bagged salad factory is a microcosm of this larger farm working community in the Salinas Valley. While there are times when workers have a chance to express Mexican ethnicity while on the shop floor, the break room at Miracle Vegetable is the key space that brings the community together. Worker hold celebrations, pot lucks, karaoke, and fund raisers that showcase their Mexican ethnicity (e.g. tamales, Mexican music). This makes it easier for them to organize and galvanize themselves when labor solidarity is needed.

Miracle Vegetable gave workers an opportunity to activate that labor solidarity when it rejected their demand of having wage equality with other bagged salad workers in the Salinas Valley. The collective bargaining agreement that the union and company were operating under expired approximately six months before I began working at Miracle Vegetable. Workers gave the company an opportunity to negotiate with the union in good faith, but they realized Miracle Vegetable was an unwilling partner after a few months. As a result, workers pressured the company with small-scale protests outside the factory and their corporate headquarters. Workers made signs, marched, and picketed Miracle Vegetable for a few weeks. The company agreed to a wage increase that put its employees on par with those of other bagged salad factories in the area. However, because the other unionized bagged salad factories are generally low-wage workplaces as well, the precarious labor relations that workers at Miracle Vegetable live through were not ameliorated. Instead, labor stability reinforced precarious labor, and precarious labor reinforced labor stability through the new contract.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Bagged salad, as a commodity, industry and labor force, is in constant flux, so future research needs to be cognizant of changes. For example, in this research I claim that bagged salad workers do not fear deportation after gaining permanent residency. Based on interviews and ethnographic observations, I also believe that bagged salad workers feel like members of the national community. This is still true

to a degree in 2017, but the Trump presidential regime has changed their sentiment. Older bagged salad workers were undocumented migrants at a time when that status was a civil offense, but younger ones arrived at a time when immigration cases switched from civil to criminal courts due to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. The hyper-criminalization of migrants in the current era will have ramifications for bagged salad going forward.

Another important area that can be addressed with future research is the arrival of more recent Mexican migrants in the Salinas Valley. While practically all workers at Miracle Vegetable are *mestizo* – indigenous and European mixed race – the newer farm laborers arriving in the Valley tend to be indigenous people from the state of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico (Lopez 2007). Their arrival in the Salinas Valley is not necessarily new. Since the passage of NAFTA, indigenous Mexican migrants have formed their own communities across the Salinas Valley. *Mestizos* have at times discriminated against or excluded indigenous Mexicans, so there is a fissure between the two groups. Thus far, indigenous Mexicans have been unable to enter bagged salad factories in large numbers like their *mestizo* counterparts. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 gave many farm working *mestizos* the opportunity to legalize their statuses, but no such law that could benefit the current undocumented population seems possible in the foreseeable future. However, indigenous Mexicans do have U.S. born children that could possibly open the door for the community to enter bagged salad. Miracle Vegetable could also decide to no longer utilize e-verify for its bagged salad employees. In any case, Miracle Vegetable will have a more

difficult time securing labor unless there is an alternative pathway that takes indigenous Mexican migrants from the fields to the factory.

Temporary staffing agencies could be one of those pathways. Until 2011, people looking for a job in bagged salad needed a referral from a family member or close acquaintance to gain entry. That changed when companies began using temporary staffing agencies in 2011. One problem, however, is that farm workers are not as accustomed to applying for work through temporary staffing agencies as the U.S. born population. The result is that companies like Miracle Vegetable are unable to recruit many farm laborers through staffing agencies, so they still supplement their hiring practices with job fairs and rely on social networks of current employees. As a result, Miracle Vegetable has a mix of approximately fifty temporary employees and seven- to eight-hundred union workers inside its factory. Full-time employees and temp workers literally do the same jobs, but for different wages rates.

Comparing bagged salad factories within the Salinas Valley is another area of focus for future research. I concentrated on Miracle Vegetable in this research because of the company's historical dominance in the lettuce and bagged salad industry. I interviewed a few employees from the other two, large, unionized bagged salad factories in the Salinas Valley. However, the interviews did not produce much variance to warrant a comparative approach. For example, workers in the other bagged salad factories also tended to be former undocumented farm laborers that migrated from Mexico, and the labor processes they described were similar across factories. After my workplace ethnography, I realized that personal observations may

have produced better comparative data but time constraints did not allow me to explore that angle.

California's recent passage of a $15 an hour minimum wage, even if it is being gradually implemented, may also compel companies to eliminate workers and mechanize labor processes tasks such as packing and stacking. As explained earlier, mechanization has changed the industry in profound ways (Glass 1966; Thomas 1985). Recently, one local company automated pallet stacking. As a result, this company, unlike Miracle Vegetable, has no need for pallet stackers. Another company has automated the packing of clam shells – which are usually reserved for spinach products – even as they struggle to automate the packing of lettuce and salad bags. Miracle Vegetable attempted to replace human inspections with x-ray machines, but they have so far not proven to be as effective as the sight and touch senses of *empacadoras*. Regardless of unforeseen technological advances, the Salinas Valley will continue to be the primary home for bagged salad. The industry cannot move too far from its lettuce supply. Companies today even ship lettuce from Arizona to the Salinas Valley during the winter months, rather than produce bagged salad in Arizona like they once did.

Workers will also have a say in changes that occur in the industry. The Salinas Valley is their home community, particularly as their ties with Mexico weaken. They, as both workers and community members, will shape the future scrimmages between stability and precarity that occur in bagged salad factories. That struggle has been ongoing for over a century. The next researcher(s) may document new era of bagged

salad, but the story will take place in the same old place.

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