

VOICES ERASED FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE:
UNDERSTANDING *CAMPESIN@S* REALITIES AND IDENTITIES THROUGH
NARRATIVES AND FORMS OF RESISTANCES

By

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ABSTRACT

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In a society where it seems ever more important for people to define their identity based on their personal story while seeking approval and validity, many *campesin@s*' [farmworkers] identities are not being treated as such. *Campesin@s*' narratives and their identity are trivialized due to the environmental movement, the food movement, and society at large. Furthermore, the lack of inclusivity and representation of *campesin@s* continue to be reinforced in the environmental discourse. This research centers on personal narrative to understand what makes a *campesin@*'s identity, how personal narratives play a critical role in empowering *campesin@s*, and the knowledge *campesin@s* can contribute to the environmental discourse. This research is situated in two agricultural cities that are located in the central coast of California. The qualitative research methods utilized in this research consisted of two case studies, semi-structure interviews, and participant observation. *Campesin@s* lose control of identify themselves when personal narrative is not taking into consideration, inevitably allowing for the dominant narrative to fabricate them a false identity. Consequently, without proper interpretation and understanding of who *campesin@s* are they will continue to be write

them off from our society and as a human beings. *Campesin@s*' narratives must be included in the environmental discourse as they are researchers and scientists of their fields. By providing allocated spaces for *campesin@s* to share their narratives and experiences there will be a more inclusive, holistic exchange of knowledge within the environmental discourse.

Keywords: *campesin@s*, personal narrative, environmental discourse, dominant narrative, marginalize, *raza*, identity, community, migrant imageries, *la causa*.

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CHANGE OF NAMES

During the interview process names were changed due to confidentiality.

**Campesin@* Fuerte -Fuerte translates to strong

* *Campesin@* Reservado – Reservado is a person that tends to keep to himself

PURPOSE

Narrative I: My dad comes to see me. He asks me how my day went in the fields. I share with him about the *Doña* and the how hard it is on my back, to be bending for 10 hours. My whole body started aching after 3 hours. I tell him I'm not a *piscadora* [strawberry picker] like I wished I was (like he was). I inform him that I call the *campesin@s* and myself the "frontline" of the *piscadores* as we go before the *piscadores* to cut the *guia* [vains], cleaning up the circuits in order for the *piscadores* to quickly pick up the strawberries. I start asking my dad about his experience when he worked in the fields, he shares with me how he would work with his parents and his siblings. Remembering how his younger siblings that were still in high school would come to help pick the strawberries once school had finished. I feel that we are connecting in another level. My dad asks me if my brother used the cream he gave him, used by veterinarian to treat sore and ached muscles for animal patients. I tell him that he used the cream and rolling pins to massage my legs. My whole body is pain as I'm finally lying in bed at 9pm. Before my dad leaves he expresses how proud he is of what I'm doing and how proud I make him.



Figure 1 My brother is holding Ortolan, veterinarian cream used to treat animals' sores

There were so many things that I needed to learn, understand, and process in how individually, and as a whole my *raza* [people] were being impacted by social structures and how such structures dictated or were part of our identity formation. Many times we take for granted the privileges we have- forgetting what our parents, grandparents, our ancestors had to go through, in order for us to have the opportunities we have. At times one has to work backward before going forward in discovering one's self-identity. That is where my purpose lies. I knew that in order to have a better understanding of myself, I had to start where it began- with the people that gave birth to me, my parents. Both my parents left their native land to migrate to the U.S., to have a better future for their family, their future children, and for themselves. My parents started in the fields. My father worked in the strawberry fields for 3 years and mother only worked for 3 days as she was pregnant with my eldest sister. They shared with me that it was one of the hardest jobs they had ever worked. Through experiencing such livelihood my parents had their own *campesin@* reality, in which allowed them to be compassionate and embrace the *campesin@* community. My mother began babysitting *campesin@s'* children when I was 5 years old. One particular *campesino* family has remained like family to us, as my mother took care of their daughters like they were hers. We played together, grew up, and the three of us were fortunate enough to attend college. I had the honor to interview their father who has been working in the fields for about 30 years. He spoke with wisdom and included his wife during the interview, verifying some of his responses with her. He was the same as he I remembered him, a kind soul with a warm laugh and hardworking hands.



Figure 2 My father's family taking a break from working in the strawberry fields in Nipomo, CA

I am investing my energy and time to an environmental discourse that serves to open up space for more people of color, people that come from a diverse background—both ethnic and educational, and a space that does not alienate people with labels in which *they* do not identify with. It is through such means that one can open up and share *their* world with others not familiar with their realities. Marisol Ruiz, professor in the Education Department highlights how the dominant group feels threaten by us, Latin@s, Chican@s, Brown people, by our presence and how they find ways to silence us. “They want us to take it and keep quiet. Are we such a threat? *Pero estamos aqui. Resistimos*

atra vez de existencia. (But we are here. We resist through existence)” stated Ruiz when she spoke to my comrades and I during one of our M.E.Ch.A.(Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ Aztlan) committee meeting. It is through my presence that I exist, with my body that I stand, and my voice that I challenge the dominant group, that has been entangled with white supremacy ideals and practices. I challenge the environmental discourse that has followed a similar worldview through its principles and interactions by excluding Abuelita [grandmother, said in an endearment way] knowledge that my people withhold and not inviting them to the discourse that very much pertains to them.

INTRODUCTION

Narrative II: Querido Señor Presidente, no somos criminales, ni malos hombres, ni si quería somos ilegales- somos seres humanos y trabajadores. Y como humanos merecemos ser tratados tal como somos, ni menos ni más. Esto es una proclamación a la sociedad, que merecemos ser parte de la discusión del medioambiente y nosotros somos los únicos que tenemos el derecho a representados nosotros mismos. Porque tal conversación nos involucrar y pertenece a nuestro ser bien y nuestra presencia. Necesitamos ser oídos. Dear Mr. President, we are not criminals, nor bad men, we are not even illegals- we are human beings and workers. And as humans we deserve to be treated as such, not less nor more. This is a proclamation to the society, that we deserve to be part of the environmental discussion and that we are the only ones that can represent ourselves. For such conversations involve us and has to do with our wellbeing and our existence. We must be heard.

A Collective Narrative from *campesin@s*, 2016

I want to be as transparent as I can with my audiences. I do not claim to be the “authoritative” voice of this work or of this group. Nor do I wish to speak for this group of people, I serve both as the mediator, to channel the narratives that *campesin@s* have shared with me, and as an outsider within, sharing both the realities I experienced and witnessed. Prior to my academic stature, my reality was seen as a personal struggle and at times, validated once seen from a national scale. In my research, I rely on the personal narrative to understand what makes a *campesin@’s* [farm worker] identity, how personal narratives play a critical role in empowering *campesin@s*, and the value narratives can contribute to the environmental discourse. This will create a more comprehensive assessment to execute an effective, inclusive plan in improving our agricultural lands while creating more sustainable practices in our environments. This plan entails creating a new language, one that will produce a bridge between *campesin@s* and people that are

working, volunteering, serving- being part of this environmental discourse. The *campesin@s*' struggles in the fields is a social issue that is pivotal to a large-scale transfiguration in how we view and treat the people that feed our nation. I address the complexity of *campesin@* identity while taking into account how political entities, societal structures, and the labor force play a significant role in projecting a false narrative and creating an identity for *campesin@s* due to the master frame and narrative, written and told by the white supremacy system that is in place. Throughout my work I return to white supremacy as it allows for a discourse of colonization, decolonization, and forms of resistance. With approaching this critical issue from all three angles it challenges the master frame and narrative, enabling for *campesin@s* narratives to be at the center of the discourse and serving as their own subjects. By *campesin@s* being subjects they have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, and name their history in this society that benefits from *campesin@s*.¹

bell hooks states that those who dominate are seen as subjects and those who are dominated are considered objects. "As objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity is created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject" (hooks, 42). One group that has skewed *campesin@s*' identity has been the mainstream environmental movement as it dismisses *campesin@s*' experiences and knowledge. To elaborate, the movement has failed to incorporate the *campesin@* community in its agenda. Gregory Mengel argues that the

¹ hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press. p. 42-48.

agenda and worldview of the ecology movement is formed by unacknowledged race and class privilege, making it irrelevant to people of color and low income white people (2012). The movement has generated literature, products, and propaganda that have created a dichotomy between “American citizens” and “illegal immigrants”. Creating both texts and imaginary that portray *campesin@s* to fit the criteria of those writing and painting the images. What our country has managed to achieve is to allow for certain groups to become the “authority” voice as they speak on behalf on an identity that is not theirs, while reinforcing a manifestation of the politics of domination.² Sarah Jaquette Ray asserts in her work *Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture* that environmentalism can create social injustice through discourses of the body. Ray contends that “the expression of environmental disgust toward certain kinds of bodies draws problematic lines among ecological ‘subjects’-those who are good for and belong in nature- and ecological ‘others’-those who are treats to or out of place in nature” (2013). Discourses need to be centralized around environments and the humans that already exist and work in such areas, in order to create spaces and allow for these ecological “others”- for *campesin@s*, to become their own subjects.

Personal narrative helps to understand who *campesin@s* are and their realities in the U.S. Many *campesin@s* share similar backgrounds in regards to their race, class, and legal status—playing an essential role in agriculture since before the Bracero Program. Despite this, *campesin@s* continue to be exploited and treated as second class citizens, if

² My thoughts were shaped by hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*

citizens at all. hooks addresses the power that “authorities” wield when they write about a group to which they do not belong, stating that “as long as their authority is constituted by either the absence of the voices of the individuals whose experiences they seek to address, or the dismissal of those voices as important, the subject-object dichotomy is maintained and domination is reinforced” (43). Allowing for *campesin@s* to be their own agents and authors of their lives dismantles these forms of oppression. Comprehending the complexity of the *campesin@s*’ identity is vital as it can contribute to the environmental discourse by integrating a more inclusive, accurate representation of the *campesin@* community, providing a more concrete, complete environmental discourse.

My research began during a historical moment; 3 distinct individuals were running for president. Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump- all of which would have brought more division and animosity among our country, if elected president. Prior to Donald Trump becoming our 45th president, I shared with my cohort how I was nervous and uneasy for republican nominee, Donald Trump to actually be the president of the United States. Several of my colleagues chuckled stating that it was all a big joke, reassuring me that he would never make it pass the primaries. It is now February 2017 and Donald Trump has been making executive orders that have brought more fear and hostility to our country. And while our country seems to be torn right in between, with half of our country wanting Trump to be our commander in chief while the other half remains in protest, now more than ever is vital for the voices and narratives of *campesin@s* to be heard. White supremacy has long been existing in our society and perpetually creating detrimental effects among the *campesin@* community, producing

racism that was obscure for many individuals, and generating false narratives that would criminalize and objectified *campesin@s*. The dominant group, white supremacy, has created narratives that has classified *campesin@s* to be not only objects but less than humans.

This research is situated in two agricultural cities that are located in the central coast and are 157 miles apart- Salinas and Santa Maria, California. The questions that drove my research were: What encompasses the formation of the *campesinos*' identity in Salinas and Santa Maria? How will understanding the complexity of the *campesinos*' identity contribute to the environmental discourse in a manner that will integrate a more inclusive, accurate representation of the *campesino* community? The first question aimed to have a more thorough understanding of who *campesin@s* are by exploring how they see themselves, their perception on how society views them, and the realities that they daily face. The second question emerges from scholarship about how social movements and communities cannot progress from a single organizing method. Nor can resistance derive and maintain its momentum from a singular technique; in order for social change to occur, collaboration with a diverse set of backgrounds, perspectives, and techniques need to take place. In what follows, I compare and contrast patterns and overlapping themes that derive from the qualitative interviews and my participation observation. I argue that if the environmental community advocates for the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems, then *campesin@s*' voices need to be part of such environmental discourse.

This thesis is comprised of research approaches, research design, and research methods. This research honors an inductive framework as I built my theory through grounded theory, emphasizing on individual meaning and the significance of rendering the complexity of the situation (Creswell,13). The framework of my research is conceptualized through qualitative research, focused heavily on interviews to collect narratives. Through narrative research I was able to study the lives *campesin@s* and asked many *campesin@s* to share their stories. I strive to justify the narratives of *campesin@s* and to create meaning from the views of *campesin@s*. I was able to attach my personal narrative in regards to my relation and commitment with the *campesin@* community resulting in a collaborative narrative. There has been a void in the literature regarding this group of individuals and the value they equate as a human being. I have centered my research on two case studies, which I aim to use to amplify the voices of these marginalized participants. The qualitative research methods that were employed were semi-structure interviews, participant observation, and journaling. These research methods enabled for my research questions to be explored throughout the process of collecting data, analyzing, and interpreting.

In order to transform our environments and environmental discourse to a more inclusive, accurate representation it is necessary to understand the complexity of the *campesin@s*' identity and to listen to their narratives as they bring a perspective and knowledge that too often is devalued. It took me years to discover such phenomenon and almost two decades to recognize that the *campesin@* community that I once was ashamed of, was my path to empowerment. I did not realize the specious reasoning that I had lived

by was constructed by institutionalized racism and a white supremacist system. Self-hatred towards my own brown skin and absence of love towards the community that had raised me were visible effects of what racism and white supremacy did to my life, without my consent. I returned to my community and immersed myself with the knowledge and wisdom that my community had all along. In doing so I began to dismantle such hostile mindset in order to reclaim my self-identity and have ownership over my mind and the strength I had within me all along. Through such process and understanding, I stand proud to bring forward what my community and *raza* taught me. I have the responsibility to share this message because of the commitment and trust that my community gave me.

Narrative III: In the distance I hear a Spanish radio station covering the 2016 presidential campaign. It's discussing the republican nominee, Donald Trump, and his promises to certain "Americans" to make this country great again. The Spanish radio station is being heard from a *campesino* who is carrying a small mobile radio, he is two rows away and ahead of me. He is cutting the vines from the strawberries, quickly and diligently. Earlier that day the supervisor paid a visit to our work site, catching our *cuadrilla* [crew] by surprise. The supervisor complained to our *Mayordomo* (supervisor's assistant and *campesin@* recruiter) that we are working too slow, not cutting the vines correctly, and "standing" for too long. I think of the supervisor's words and what I'm seeing. A hard working man with his back bent while listening to how this country needs to become great again. He wipes his sweat off with an old bandana and tells his daughter to continue working. He is done with his row and goes to where his daughter's row to help her.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Caught up in the whirl of a gringo society, confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes, suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society... I have come a long way to nowhere, unwillingly dragged by that monstrous, technical, industrial giant called Progress and Anglo success.

Rodolfo Gonzalez, *I am Joaquin* 1967

Understanding *campesin@s'* identity formation in multi-ethnic communities helps to transform environments and environmental discourse requiring diverse perspectives and experiences beyond the dominant narrative that exist in academia today. Comprehending the complexity of *campesin@s'* identity and listening to their narratives, as they bring experience and knowledge, provides a wider understanding on how to achieve what so many environmentalists devote their energies to: pure, organic food, and an agricultural production system free of pesticides. Yet, the perspective that is often left out of this mainstream environmentalist mission are the very bodies whose labor produces the ideal fresh, organic, pesticide-free produce. I argue that it is a contradiction to continue to talk about consuming organic food while failing to acknowledge the bodies that slave over these crops. People who work ten hours a day, six to seven days a week under the sun with their backs bent should be treated humanely and given the same opportunities that most other work forces receive by working in the U.S.

This literature review covers three pivotal bodies of literature in order to understand the environmentalist obsession with food production and health. First, I examine the complexities of identity formation through the entities and social structures that play a significantly contribute to *campesin@s*' identity. Second, I highlight a metamorphosis of identity through assimilation, existence, and existing through resistance. Lastly, I look at how contemporary environmentalism has dismissed *campesin@* voices while imposing on them a false identity. This literature review constructs a theoretical framework through which *campesin@s*' realities and narratives serve as a category of analysis that can translate to a new body of knowledge and language to communicate with *all* existing bodies that work the agricultural lands.

Although, I have chosen to use the following literary works to help create a frame work, I want the reader to comprehend the process of following personal narratives in their respective context. This grand focus on personal narratives may offset traditional academia. For example, traditional academia is noted as a dominant voice that often oppresses the personal narrative due to its infeasible nature to prove ideas and feelings through science or quantitative means. These people rarely get their voices heard in an academic setting as the dominant voice often dismisses on a conscious and unconscious level. Despite personal narratives failing to produce certainties in the realm of education, it does not take away the fact that these personal narrative are coming from real people dealing with real issues.

Critical Race Theory and Social Structures Literature

The world is abundant in perceptions that humans construct. We perceive what is around us, drawing conclusions and creating categories from what we see and who we meet. The perceptions we create can be used to protect us from situations or people that may cause harm. For example, too often what we perceive is constructed and manipulated against one another, stimulating discrimination, animosity, and stigmatizations since time immemorial. Such as having a fear of authority figures due to negative experiences or not being a legal citizen of this country. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in *Critical Race Theory* who in their work exemplifies how popular images and stereotypes of various minority groups shift over time. In one era, they can serve to gratify white people while in another era that same group can be portrayed as a group that requires close monitoring and repression (2012). This method has led minority groups to choose to either assimilate or resist the false conceptions that others have imposed on them.

The term powerful concept of “race” dates back to the 17th century. The American Anthropological Association states that “race is an enduring concept that has molded our nation’s economy, laws and social institutions, a complex notion that has shaped each of our destinies” (2012). If we trace U.S. history, we find that one’s status was determined by three crucial aspects: wealth, gender, and religion. These three characteristics served as main factors to define an individual’s status. As academia tries its best to be inclusive to all voices to eliminate this dominant status, it still falls short when including the sub groups that some call the “Sleeping Giant” (Latin@ population in the U.S.). Under the “Sleeping Giant” falls the *campesin@* population. Furthermore, academia still poses a

dominant voice which has its roots from early founders of white, wealthy male population. This impedes the personal narrative from the *campesin@* population which is a major part of producing the numbers of the “Sleeping Giant” which previously was mentioned. Noticing the time before common slavery of Black people in the United States, white elites realize that they are outnumbered by indentured servants of white and black complexion. Recognizing that if black and white slaves were to unite and revolt, white elites would cease to maintain the power they have grown accustomed to. A need to create races based on exterior differences emerged. This notion of race has kept one captive as it dictates one’s future by relinquishing the right to how we see ourselves and one another. Utilizing the concept of race has served as a means of control and power to categorize humans. This further allows the dominant narrative and its voice to overshadow the personal narrative of those who have, and never have, been meant for the system of academia. Drawing from the work of Delgado and Stefancic who expand on this notion state “What makes race a confounding problem and what causes many people to not know what race is, is the view that the problems of race are the problems of the racial minority. They are not. The problem of race belongs to all us” (2012). Critical race theory elaborates on how minority groups, in the case of this thesis, the *campesin@* community, are racialized from the dominant society, highlighting that, “the ‘social construction’ thesis, holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations... races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Delgado and Stefancic elaborate on this concept and how it plays in our society, stating, “social sciences have drawn attention to the ways the dominant society

racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market... popular images and stereotypes of various minority groups shift over time” (2012). *Campesin@s* are not exempt from these types of popular images and stereotypes, they are portrayed as happy, hardworking *campesin@s* that are forever indebted to the farmer and the visiting country that provided such noble opportunity.

Perfecto, Vandermeer, Wright illustrate in *Nature's Matrix* how the formation of the plantation was the beginning of evolution and domination over agriculture, the stakeholders were the urban entrepreneurs who understood the economic value and profit of land. “The plantation system formed a model for agriculture as an economic enterprise that assembled masses of labour and large expanses of land for profitable exploitation,” (Perfecto, Vandermeer, Wright, 39). Colonialists initiated a foundation of a capitalist agricultural system that continues to have economic, social, and environmental effects. Colonial founding father Thomas Jefferson’s Query XIX in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) envisions a nation of small farmers- individuals that are economically and politically independent as they are self-reliant, debt-free, and with God given virtue.³ Sarah Wald, in *The Nature of California* draws parallels how the black plantation slave and the undocumented Latin@ laborer perform a similar cultural function in the way they invest the white farmer with a complex of racial privilege, moral virtue, and citizenship

³ Wald, S. (2016). *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

rights. Understanding U.S.'s historical political and economic development exposes the structures that are in place that create the perceptions and relations we have with one another. With the U.S. government creating a system for society to depend on governmental services and a livelihood of agricultural migration, *campesin@s* have become the new group to enslave.

Wald examines how identities are historically constituted, socially constructed, and generally in flux become seen as absolute, universal, and always already existing. Wald expands how in the late nineteenth century, the state and civil society denied many immigrants the power to legal or cultural naturalization as some immigrants were considered inassimilable, foreigners racially unable to adapt to the requirements of U.S. citizenship (2016). The domestic and foreign policies derived from migrant-labor programs have welcomed Mexican workers, *braceros* [strong arms], and *campesin@s* throughout history. Yet, many times this history is partially told and narrated by the dominant group, bringing controversy and long-standing effects in our country. By forming programs such as the importation of Mexican laborers, Bracero Program, and the more recent North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), the United States stimulated a massive migration movement toward the U.S. "During World War I the U.S. government helped fill a labor shortage by facilitating the importation of Mexican laborers to work in the farms and ranches of private landowners" (Elinson and Yogi, 2009, 55). The Bracero Program exemplifies the circulation of mass migration and the opportunity of exploiting cheap labor. "The Bracero Program allowed Mexican nationals to take temporary agricultural work in the United States...Mexican peasants, desperate

for cash work were willing to take jobs at wages scored by most Americans,” (National Museum of American History, 2015). NAFTA has become an agreement among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada that created a trilateral trade bloc in North America established since 1994 (Claufield, 2010). With NAFTA in place the 1917 Mexican Constitution that mandated the warranty of land reparations to indigenous groups cease to exist.⁴ Comprehending the historical economic relation between the U.S. and Mexico reveals the social structure that is in place and how Mexican and Latino workers have responded.

Identity Formation Literature

By looking at through a multi-dimension lens there will be a better understanding how *campesin@s* identity is developed. Simply looking at a *campesin@s*'s historical background one might draw conclusions and impose an identity that might represent only their “voluntarily” choice of being a migrant but fail to address the totality of that choice and the sacrifices behind that decision. Comprehending the life experiences that *campesin@s* encounter individually, and as a community allows us to move toward a more holistic narrative. I looked at three bodies of scholarship to have a better grasp of what constitutes a *campesin@s*'s identity: migration, culture, and personal experiences. In all three bodies of literature I examine how *campesin@s* have assimilated, existed, or existed through resistance and how that has affected their identity formation. The lens of

⁴ Khokhar, T. (2013). Zapatista Development: Local Empowerment and the Curse of Top-down Economics in Chiapas, Mexico. *Kennedy School Review*, 13(41)

migration demonstrates how *campesin@s* have lived with such life-changing experience. When looking at identity formation through the lens of culture, I highlight on the terms that *campesin@s* are associated with and how culture is a means of identity expression. Lastly, looking at identity formation through the lens of personal accounts I reference narratives that *campesin@s* have shared about their experiences and their identities. All three aspects that the bodies of literature address in their work intersect in some form or time, whether a *campesin@* embrace all or none as part of their identity is an individual decision that he/she/they are entitled.

Colonization & Migration Literature

This body of literature engages with the lasting effects that colonization have had on the Mesoamerican people: the forced removal of the people and its native roots from the land- in this degraded form of living-- migration. Before European colonization, indigenous people from upper and lower North American continent existed and migrated without borders. Albert Memmi, author of *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, writes that the oppressed internalize an identity that mirrors or echoes the images put forth by the dominant group; elaborating how people come to accept and believe the myths and stereotypes about their group as part of their natural definitions of self (1965). Similarly, Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire writes that the oppressed at a time of their life feel an irresistible attraction toward the oppressor and his way of life, wanting at any cost to resemble to oppressor, to imitate him (1968). Keith Osajima, author of *Internalized Racism*, draws parallels from Freire and Memmi's analyses, which indicate that

oppression forces the oppressed to construct their identity, their subjectivity, in terms and contexts defined by the dominant group. In the words of a native spokesperson for *Mexica* New Year, an annual celebration where people gather to welcome the New Year that Mesoamerican people welcomed, stated “We must reject the term immigrant that they have placed on us. We are not immigrants. We are natives. We are native to these lands. They labeled us immigrants so that we can forget our roots. We must be proud of our roots” (*Mexica* New Year, 2017). Comprehending one’s origin and history is the start of liberation of the mind and self-discovery. While not all Mexicans might identify as native, nor all Latin@s or Hispanics identify as Chican@s, a sense of belonging is tied to one’s knowledge of their history. The dominant group has a responsibility of listening to groups where this history comes from and continues to be created from, and critical sources are the different voices and vantage points of struggle, determination, and hope.

Migration is a strenuous, life-and-death experience, one which *campesin@s* are forced to do. Yet, the dominant anti-immigrant argument states that migration is a voluntarily act, that migrants willingly risk their welfare, and that they therefore should not receive any benefits or opportunities. Migration studies assume a dichotomy between voluntary, economic, and migrant on the one hand and forced, political, refugee on the other hand.⁵ Seth Holmes (2013), in *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, elaborates on the logic that this dichotomy proposes:

⁵ Seth M. Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 17.

that refugees are granted political and social rights in the host country as they were forced to migrate for political reasons. Conversely, migrants are not allowed these rights because they are understood to voluntarily choose to migrate for economic reasons... However, my Trinqui companions experience their labor migration as anything but voluntarily. (17)

Juanita Sundberg and Bonnie Kaserman's work, *Cactus Carvings & Desert defecations: Embodying Representations of Border Crossings in Protected Areas on the Mexico-US Border*, elaborate on the importance and the influence that the role of language, imagined community, notion of heritage, and a national identity has on building and shaping society's perception through discourse. These elements are the product of environmental subjects and identity formation that *campesins@s* are defined by. The role of language created by the hegemonic group to describe people that cross the Mexico-US border range from illegal immigrants, illegals, illegal invaders, aliens, wetbacks to anchor babies. The terms derive from different places-- from government laws like Operation Wetback, multiple government agencies, and media and popular culture. In addition to cultivating a set language, the state has constructed an imagined community for Americans, particularly for white Anglo-Americans, to belong and have ownership over designed spaces. This imagined community was established with the foundation being nature, gradually integrating into national narratives, the house being the designated natural areas for all citizens to enjoy, and the roof being the right to claim ownership over appointed territory.

With the state producing this imagined community, Americans are able to have a sense of belonging, while generating a self-identity by which Americans can declare as their own. Furthermore, this imagined community constructed by the hegemonic group has also set who will be included and excluded from the community. Sundberg and Kaserman expand that the association between undocumented immigrants and the traces they leave behind- trash and human waste- works to preclude them from inclusion in the body politic as rights-claiming individuals (2007). As these protected areas are being projected to Americans that such lands are “theirs”, it frames the nation’s heritage while establishing a national identity. Thus, when “wetbacks” cross the border illegally, they are not only invading America’s rich soil but also evading the law, while being an environmental threat as they injure and contaminate nature. Dehumanizing undocumented immigrants and disassociating them as humans stigmatize undocumented immigrants as being a hazard towards Americans’ protected soils and criminals who believe they are above the law. *Campesin@s* fall under the category of undocumented immigrants as the majority of them cross the border “illegally” which exposes them to the same ridicule and subordination. Furthermore, *campesin@s*’ decision of arriving to the U.S. “illegally” leaves them at the mercy of Americans who have “earned” a national identity through this imagined community. Yet what is left out of the conversation is how *campesin@s* will never truly be Americans because this national identity was meant to exclude them, regardless if they arrived to the U.S. “legally” or through a working permit, they do not fit the profile. As mentioned previously, understanding the formation of *campesin@s* identity and their absence from the environment discourse through their

personal narrative is directly dismissed given their citizenship status or the grouped identity of being associated as “illegals” in the U.S.

The obstacles that *campesin@s* take on during their migration journey range from saving enough money to pay the *coyote* [border-crossing guide] to being detained by the Border Patrol to never making it beyond the desert perimeters and never returning back home. This journey has a different level of impact and effects on immigrants and *campesin@s*. To many it is a difficult story to retell, to others it is a story that must be told. Alicia Schmidt Camacho’s analysis on the imagery of migration, *Migrant Imageries* brings in narratives of migrants who have crossed the border to the U.S. Camacho begins her account of migrant experience through the testimony of Aurelio’s journey. Through Aurelio’s failed attempt to cross the border, Camacho (2008) conceptualizes the migrant imaginary that Aurelio is part of:

his humiliations grant him a privileged vantage point from which to judge the cruelty of the passage... The North is like the sea, he tells us, conjuring the expansive divide that the territorial boundary inscribes between the wealth of the United States, its promise of opportunity, and the life of itinerant labor he knows in rural Jalisco. (13)

Camacho notes how Aurelio refuses to include his failed crossings into his narrative of self and yet, the North is of great influence in his self-definition as a wage earner and as a man. Camacho addresses how Aurelio’s testimony underlines the struggle to maintain a sense of social agency that uproot migrants and places them at the mercy of the

transborder labor market and its racial caste system. Camacho conceptualizes how the displacement of Mexican migrants leads them to occupy a space between rights and rightlessness, between belonging and alienation, as they work and move through the transnational circuit (2008). Through this time and space *campesin@s* find themselves in a binary state, where they are to assimilate or resist, where they are to lose their roots and gain a new identity or where they are to retain a stronger tie to the country they are leaving behind.

Teresa Cordova in *Power and Knowledge: Colonialism in the Academy* addresses the struggle that the working-class people of color have undergone when trying to voice their experiences, encountering numerous mechanisms to silence them. Cordova exemplifies how such voices are silenced, as she contends “We encounter silencing when our voices speak of resistance to injustice—both against ourselves and our people. And yet, colonization is the historical legacy that continues to haunt us, even today” (1998, 17). Cordova elaborates on the colonial relations that serve the exploitative needs of colonialism— to appropriate the resources of the people they colonize, whether that be land, water, or people (1998). Furthermore, Cordova states that “(d)etecting the ideology of colonial social relations is a critical step towards changing them” (1998, 19). In drawing parallels with how colonization has affected *campesin@s*, the insidious effects are the categories that *campesin@s* are categorized under: legal status, ethnicity, and race, all of which they are repressing. Time and space must be allowed in order for *campesin@s* to reclaim and define their own identity, whether that entails rejecting or accepting all or none as part of their identity. This enables *campesin@s* to make their

decisions by how they identify in relation to the colonizer and how they view themselves is a vital point in challenging the hierarchy of truth and knowledge. To sum up the literary works being used, the importance of consuming produce without harmful chemicals, social construction of race, the creation of plantations as environmental domination, and the restrictive limits of American identity support the idea that the environmental discourse is dismissive of formation of *campesin@s* identity and their relationship with the land they work so closely with. Where the literature falls short is the personal narrative that is key to grasping what is truly missing from environmental discourse concerning personalizing the labor force.

Domination and Culture Literature

The following body of literature illustrates how the dominant group appropriates marginalized cultures and the demeaning terms the dominant group imposes to be identities for Latin@s. The concept and term “illegal” immigrants and “aliens” referring to Mexicans and Latin@s derives from United States’ hypocritical stance of their capitalistic need for cheap labor and the government’s lust to maintain its racial hierarchies.⁶ Before the 1924 Immigration Act, prior to Operation Gatekeeper, and previous to the current bigotry reiterated by President Trump that Hispanics are criminals, indigenous tribes of Mesoamerica resided in the U.S. Holmes elaborates in

⁶ My work is influenced by personal experiences, immigration marches that I’ve been part, and works such as *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (1969)

Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies how the words migrant, migrant worker, and farmworker are terms used to denote the primarily undocumented Mexican people who work harvesting fruit and vegetables in the U.S.⁷ These terms not only separate farmworkers with the rest of the working population, due to their job title, but they also implicate a legal status that they belong to. Furthermore, these terms provoke our country to perceive these people as a nuisance to our society with a lower-class and an ethnic background that hinders our nation. On the contrary *campesin@s* are the backbone of our agricultural environments and the source to environmental knowledge. *Campesin@s* must be given the platform to share their knowledge of the fruits that we consume and the lands that we are advocating to be transformed to pesticide-free and sustainably practiced. Who better to ask than the *campesin@s* that work year-round in these lands? In understanding *campesin@s*' identity and narratives, *they* are able to be their own subject, no longer having to objectify themselves nor have to validate their reality. They not only share their story, but also reclaim their history, no longer dismissed from textbooks and discourses, but enabling one to read and learn *their* story.

Critically examining the motivations of scholars that choose to “study” or conduct research on *campesin@s* helps us see how the researcher places him/herself with *campesin@s*, as subjects or as their equal. The work of some researchers at times fails to do what it initially sought- to provide a deeper understanding of a certain group of people. This approach at many times reinforces the colonial system that is place. The

⁷ Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*, 185.

Preamble of the National Association for Chicano Studies (NACS), established in 1972, addresses the problematic factors in research in the following:

We recognize that mainstream research based on an integrationist perspective which emphasized consensus, assimilation, and the legitimacy of societal institutions, has obscured and distorted the significant historical role which class conflict and group interests have taken in shaping our existence as a people to the present moment. Our research efforts are aimed at directly confronting such tenuous images and interpretations and challenging the structure of inequality based on class, race, and sexist privileges in this society...Our research should address itself to the pressing problems and issues affecting our communities.

(1992)

Cordova illustrates such a form of research when addressing how “(w)e need to honestly examine the ways many of us have been brought ‘under control’ and as a result, betray ourselves, our people, and the vision of a better world” (24). Evaluating and questioning how knowledge is gathered and generated allows for more diverse voices to partake in the production of knowledge, empowering those to disseminate and facilitate such knowledge that they are part of. La Loba Loca, South American Migrant, artist, researcher focuses on disseminating information and facilitating knowledge shares centered on exposing whitewashed history by remembering and reclaiming ancestral teachings and medicine that she calls Abuelita [grandmother] Knowledge. Abuelita Knowledge is passed down knowledge that includes the “bodies of knowledge that have been oppressed, stolen, silenced, gone underground, hidden themselves in between spice

jars in kitchen cabinets, locked away but remembered and restored when necessary” (Loba, 2016).” Loba highlights how Abuelita Knowledge is both a tool and a threat to this current system as it decenters whiteness and Eurocentric ways of knowing, re-evaluating what knowledge is considered important and what source is considered valid (2016). Furthermore, Loba addresses how “acknowledging people of color’s legacy in the mainstream would undermine the classist, racist, and xenophobic ideals that our society stands on” (2014). Attempting to understand a *campesin@*’s identity looking through cultural and societal components allows one to see how receptive and welcoming the dominant culture has been to the non-dominant cultures. What is revealed are the effects that colonialism have left in our society- racial hierarchies, communities marginalized, and cultural amnesia.

El Plan de Santa Barbara speak of *La lucha*, the struggle, which runs in the blood of Mexicans, Latin@s, and immigrants, addressing in such form “Throughout history the quest for cultural expression and freedom has taken the form of a struggle” (1969). *Campesin@s* are very familiar of this struggle as they live it when leaving their native country to work in foreign lands. When reaching the other side of the border, *campesin@s* are faced with acculturation and assimilation in order to survive. Through *campesin@s*’ *cultura* [culture], one is able to engage and learn from within the community- receiving knowledge from the main source. Through culture, one shares food while exchanging stories. Francisco Jimenez in *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* narrates his experience when working in the strawberry fields as a boy and the people he encountered along his migration. Jimenez shares the conversation that

took place with Don Gabriel during lunchtime when Jimenez and Don Gabriel exchanged lunch. *Campesin@s*' struggles, stories, and experiences are filled with knowledge that can contribute to the new language that we must learn in order to communicate with people that are different from one's self. Thus, *campesin@s* become part of the knowledge production through their existence alone and for the broader scheme of other marginalized communities to participate in knowledge production.

This knowledge can be translated into articles or books, from the accounts of *campesin@s* who have the authority of lived experiences, enabling them to be in the best possible position to share information about the group they are part of.⁸ At the same time, this knowledge can remain through the forms of narratives were *campesin@s* decide when to share and to whom they share with. Regardless of the form that the content is disseminated it is pivotal to recognize that all knowledge is valid and important. Loba addresses how many migrant people feel ashamed in sharing their remedies and “practices as we have been brainwashed to aspire to colonial and capitalistic white supremacist ways of knowing. It is affirming to know that this a collective body of knowledge, and that this knowledge is sacred and must be protected” (Loba, 2016). Meanwhile the dominant group prides itself on its green rhetoric such as the interdependence of non-human and human life, and over-priced tribal garments that are culturally appropriated from indigenous people. To elaborate, this green rhetoric falls short in mentioning the labor, the *hands* that produced these “eco-friendly, natural”

⁸ hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press. p. 42-48.

products for the consumer. Perpetuating a faceless life who has no connection with the consumer; in this case the *campesin@* and the buyer, who superficially have no relation but underneath the surface they are more connected than separate. Loba states “Colonization did a great job at separating us from medicines that now are sold in high-end health stores and expensive workshops taught by white people who have no idea of the implications of traditional practices” (2016). Certain cultures and traditions are not welcomed in the U.S.- *campesin@s*’ culture and knowledge is not received into the process of knowledge making. Yet, culture is a fundamental means of not only expressing one’s identity but a form of communication, without the need to use words. I will expand on this thought in my data analysis section where I saw cultures simultaneously unite and divide in the fields, reflecting the diversity of culture and values within the migrant community.

Non-Dominant Narrative & Chican@ Identity Literature

This body of literature expands on the non-dominant narrative and the Chican@ identity literature that has opened up the conversation on the narratives and identities that are too often seen as counterintuitive or as threats. Chican@ is not an identity that should be imposed on any Latin@ or Hispanic, but it should be brought into the conversation as it is a form of resistance towards the master narrative and preordained identity. In *The Theory of Racial Formation*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant assert that the master frame was created and is controlled by white supremacists that have subordinated and oppressed non-white groups. In *Traces of the Master Narrative* Ikemoto addresses her

goal of revealing the hand of the master narrative in social discourse for the reason to highlight traces of white supremacy as evidence of that narrative; she states "I use 'master narrative' to describe white supremacy's prescriptive, conflict-constructing power, which deploys exclusionary concepts of race and privilege in ways that maintain intergroup conflict" (302). Ikemoto defines master narrative as race and racial identity in opposition. By identifying, what master narrative is Ikemoto is able to illustrate the connection that master narrative has with replicating skewed identities that the dominant society's regurgitates, while the racial hierarchy that is in place projects whiteness being at the top.

Sarah Wald explores the paradoxical ways farmers and farmworkers in California are represented, elaborating how farm labor helps one understand who is allowed to belong to this nation and in what ways. Wald illustrates the notion of belonging in her following argument "The white citizen farmer and the abject alien farm laborer are subject constructions that rely on a common set of beliefs about land ownership and racialized labor hierarchies originating in the United States' legacy of slavery and settler colonialism" (5). Understanding these historical linkages of what constitutes identity and who is considered as a respected citizen enables one to depict what narratives are included in our education and in our society. Wald states that by studying agrarian narratives, she was able to identify the cultural logic through which various groups are written into and out of the nation, as well as the roles of nature and land ownership play in the way we envision national belonging (5). The narratives that *campesin@s* share are few yet powerful as they share from their personal experience. Yet, these narratives and perspectives are often devalued as they are transmitted from a personal account and not

from a higher learning institution or a validate entity, such as the dominant group.

Meanwhile Michel Foucault illustrates how within each society there are sets of truths and how its people exercise them. Foucault (1977) states:

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'generated politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (131)

In this case, what is legitimized and held as truth is that *campesin@s* are subjugated to the dominant group and are subject to the U.S. governmental laws that have no sunset clause for cheap labor, serving a double sentence that the jury gives, basing their evidence on a bias dominant narrative. What is not validated are personal narratives, as they might be subjective with personal feelings or opinions that can intersect with truth.

Cordova argues that defining one's perspective as "objective" implies that it is unbiased and superior representation of truth (1998). Furthermore, Cordova argues "a dispassionate 'objective' assessment of our experiences is presumably superior to the biased, a subjective interpretation from our point of view. The legitimacy to define our own identities is appropriated through the ideology of objectivity" (1998, 22). The problem lies in the contradiction that one must disconnect one's mind from their heart or else one runs the risk of being subjective. Linking the connection between mind and

heart, Laura I. Rendon in *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation* expands on figurative inner and outer landscape. Rendon connects the inner landscape to one's self- who one is, what one deeply cares about, and one's sense of purpose and meaning (2009). While outer landscape, Rendon states, is what one does with their minds, and its association with intellectualism, rationality, and objectivity (2009). Rendon addresses how "we have learned to divorce the inner from the outer. We have learned to numb our emotions and to see everything in bits and pieces disconnected from the whole" (2009). The *sentipensante* pedagogy that Rendon articulates is a transformative vision of education, one that encompasses the complementary relationship among the *sentir* [feeling] of intuition and the inner life to the *pensar* [thinking] of intellectualism and the pursuit of scholarship, and in differentiating the modes of learning- Western and non-Western ways of knowing (2009). While *campesin@s* heavily contribute to the labor industry and the U.S. economy, *campesin@s* offer knowledge, skills, values, traditions- life experiences from which we can learn from. Rendon states "(o)ften omitted from discussions of teachings and learning are the traditions of education of native people, which have existed for generations" (Rendon, 17). Resisting identities placed on one's own group is essential to decipher how groups like *campesin@s* have been oppressed and made marginalized to fit dehumanizing categories. One needs to realize that the term Chican@ and its presence within academia was made possible by some Chican@s who have occupied different roles in scholarship. Not all Latin@s, especially *campesin@s* with deep roots in another country besides the U.S., have yet been fully embraced in the environmental discourse.

In Writing the Good Life: Mexican American Literature and the Environment

Priscilla Solis Ybarra describes the alienation of Mexican Americans with land and the natural environment. The alienation that Mexican Americans faced was due to Anglo America rejection of the knowledge Mexican Americans had cultivated through generations of experience with the land in the southwest U.S. (Solis Ybarra, 2016).

Campesin@s know these lands. While politicians and society might label the Northern part of the North American continent as “American”, these lands were Aztlán once. It was the land that belonged to indigenous people and tribes that lived in land that recently has been considered U.S. property.⁹ Aztlán now serves as both a metaphor to Chicán@s and something concrete- land that they claim as theirs. It is no longer a subject to a foreign culture, which imposes a confined identity made by the oppressor. Octavio Paz in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* addresses the Spanish colonization that took place over 500 years ago and how colonization still continues to have enduring effects on Mexican@s that are in the quest for their identity. Paz states that our quest for identity gives us an unequalled look at the country hidden behind “the mask” as it difficult to identify one when they are a mix of races, characters, cultures (1994). Cordova elaborates how the term Hispanic is the colonizer’s response to Chicano, Boricua, even Latino identities, while Chicán@ identity comprehends the 500 year conquest, the connection to indigenous roots, and dreams for justice (1998). An organization that teaches the meaning

⁹ My thoughts were shaped by M.E.Ch.A (1999) *The Philosophy of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán*. Phoenix.

of being a Chican@ is Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan, M.E.Ch.A by educating how each individual needs to go through self-discovery in order to reach liberation. M.E.Ch.A is a student organization that advocates for higher education, culture, and history. M.E.Ch.A. embraces the term Chican@ and the roots of Chicanismo. Chicanismo is a concept that incorporates self-awareness with cultural identity, a fundamental step in creating political consciousness. M.E.Ch.A. addresses how Chicanismo seeks to educate the barrios and *campos* [fields] about their people's history and culture in order to create a movement of self-determination for the Liberation of Aztlan (1999). When taking the identity of Chican@, one finds their self in looking beyond their understanding of existence and search to comprehend why their fellow comrade, brother, mother, community- *raza*- has been marginalized and continues to be exploited as cheap labor.

To realize one's own identity is to be in a position for understanding. Whether Chicanismo is a response to the rejection one felt from an American identity and a Mexican identity, a realization of false citizenship through natural birth or military occupancy, *or* a cry for self love and acceptance, it started from people trying to survive. Chican@ was one way or another put in a positioned to identify as a Chican@ but only from the shoulders of the people before them. A process is being taken place where a realization of being a human is understood and accepted by others to where actualizing an identity is possible. However, people coming from Latin American countries into the U.S. to work in the fields have not yet reached this step of forming an identity within the U.S. This does not mean that *campesin@s* do not have an identity, yet their identity is

often excluded from an association of a U.S. identity. To expect *campesin@s* to leap into scholarship from a recent arrival is ludicrous to fathom, although, it is not impossible. It is highly unlikely that *campesin@s* can place themselves in environmental discourse without first going through the necessary process of accepting a somewhat American identity or adjacent to that of an American identity and the fact that environmental discourse may be unfamiliar to a person trying to navigate in an alienating country.

The account of Francisco Jimenez of *The Circuit* is a firsthand experience of how the struggle of being a *campesin@* in many ways continues to remain the same. Jimenez (1997) recalls his housing experience as young *campesin@*, working and living by the fields as a child:

We called it Tent City. Everybody called it Tent City, although it was neither a city nor a town. It was a farm worker labor camp owned by Sheehey Strawberry Farms. Tent City had no address; it was simply known as rural Santa Maria. It was on Main Street, about ten miles east of the center of town. Behind Tent City was dry wilderness and a mile north of it was the city dump where single men, most of whom, like us had crossed the border illegally. (27)

Today Tent City does not exist, nor is there an actual labor camp in Santa Maria. Instead, what you find is a designated area where *campesin@s* reside, where they are marginalized and segregated. On the west side of Santa Maria, near the strawberry fields, is a community that many Latin@s refer to as La Tijuanita [Little Tijuana]. The majority of its residents are *campesein@s*. To pay for the overpriced rent, *campesin@s* need to

rent their two-room apartment to 3-7 tenants. Through H-2A, a federal program for foreign farm laborers, *campesinos* are contracted and motels are converted to house H-2A *campesinos*. Recently new housing projects have been implemented in Santa Maria, CA. Both are controversial and cultivate frustration. Transformed motels housing H-2A *campesinos* have placed 4 *campesinos* per room until their work contract is terminated. These motel rooms meet minimal living conditions- a bathroom, a refrigerator, and a bed to share. However, according to H-2A housing regulations set by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), these rooms meet the standards as they fulfill the standards for space allotment, amenities, and housing conditions for H-2A lodging, which employers must provide at no cost to their workers (Swantson, 2016). Yet, this would not be tolerated if an employee contracted from a “developed” country, where the employee is leaving their native country for months in order to work abroad in exchange for his skills, experience, and knowledge. The double standards that present themselves in this controversial federal program are unethical and inhumane. As for the new housing project in Santa Maria, Joe Leonard CEO of Bonipak, an agriculture company that grows, harvests, cools, processes and ships millions of cartons of fresh vegetables to retailers, wholesalers and food service customers all over the world (Bonipak, 2016). Bonipak owners pride themselves of their motto, “What sets us apart is our seed to sales approach” and their vertically integrated “seed to sale” approach carried out by the entire Bonipak family. On their online website, Bonipak mentions that they control the entire process, ensuring consistent high quality produce year round, as they are located on California’s Central Coast- in the Santa Maria Valley, where they are allowed longer growing seasons, providing Bonipak a

competitive advantage over other growing regions. “They chose to settle in the Santa Maria Valley with its rich, fertile soil and mild year-round climate. Bonipak's founders understood location was just one step to ensure quality and consistent supply” (Bonipak, 2016). While there is no longer a labor camp or Tent City, environmental racism is still present as much as it was in the 1950s. The only things have changed are the locations and the type of housing *campesin@s* reside, making it more subtle and away from the public eye. Reading from personal accounts such Jimenez’s work enables the reader to catch a glimpse of *campesin@s* realities. *Campesin@s* become the true experts of this field, both figuratively and literally, as their livelihoods relies on it.

To restate the element of survival, noted from Jimenez’s writings and personal narrative *campesin@s* often find themselves in discomfort, especially when crossing into the U.S. “illegally”. Environmental discourse and the identity formation of *campesin@s* may be the furthest idea from one’s mind, yet it does not discredit the vital role *campesin@s* play in the environment they work so closely with. Their voice along with their experience is real, both which need to be taken into account when noting who they are and how they should be included in the dominant narrative of academia, specifically in the environmental discourse.

Contemporary Environmentalism: Fabricating a False Identity

The following body of literature exemplifies how the contemporary environmentalism has accredited *campesin@s* a false identity that have silenced the voices of *campesin@s* by not inviting them to the table of discourse, decision-making, and knowledge production about sustainable food production and consumption in

America. *Campesin@s* must partake in all three components. Therefore, in order for the rest of the components to follow through, the component that must come first is the discourse. John Hultgren in *Border Walls Gone Green: Nature and Anti-Immigrant Politics in America* highlights the importance of discourse, as it is the vital material foundation through which biopolitics and sovereignty are contingently related to one another (2015). Hultgren elaborates how this has affected immigrant bodies as progressive discourse of green sovereignty precedes a biopolitical project that validates attempts to decrease immigrant populations to bare life (2015). Meanwhile, *campesin@s*' image and identity are distorted as misleading and false accounts are given to society. I drew many parallels from Ray's work, *The Ecological Other*, as she argues the importance of looking through certain lens in order to understand environmental crises. In this case, in order to understand how *campesin@s* have become the "other" and been given a false identity, we must look into the contemporary environment movement lens. In *The Vulnerable Planet*, John B. Foster addresses how war, economic inequality, and third world underdevelopment are the three components that are nextrically bound to the larger question of the systematic degradation of the planet and of the conditions of life for a majority of the world's people. Foster (1994) challenges the mainstream environmental movement by addressing the aspects that the movement lacks:

The failure to perceive this connection is the principal weakness of mainstream environmentalism. If we are to make sense of the environmental crisis, we must not abandon radical social concerns but broaden and deepen them to take into

account the destruction of the earth itself. It is above all the interconnectedness of social and environmental problems that constitutes the primary basis upon which a potent movement for change can be created. (9, 10)

Foster argues that the root of the problem lies in social and historical factors rooted in the productive relations, technological imperatives, and historically conditioned demographic trends that characterize the dominant social system (1994). Foster begins dismantling the “crisis of nature” by stating that at the core of the problem is the capitalist world system that took place in Europe in the late 1400s. *Campesin@s* and immigrants are affected by the capitalist system as they are forced to leave their homes and migrate to the U.S. Nevertheless, when arriving to “American” soil, *campesin@s* are measured by their race and class. *Campesin@s* come to the U.S. to work, they contribute to production and become part of the U.S. economy. Yet, they are considered and treated as inferiors, are marginalized in our society, and treated inhumanely in the workforce. Foster states that capitalism has been successful over the past centuries in “conquering” the earth while exploiting nature and enriching the sphere of the economy and increasing profitability. *Campesin@s* and the agricultural lands are the product of such exploitive profit.

Loba recognizes the problematic rhetoric and practices that the mainstream environment movement imposes on people, particularly brown migrant people. Loba states how she is distraught when she sees how white people pretend to be connected to the earth while refusing to comprehend that migrant brown people come from

backgrounds where “environmentalism” is not discussed as they grow up doing unintentional “green” things (2014). The U.S. government replaces its scapegoats, from one marginalized group to another. The faults and wrong doings of the “founding fathers” in their creation of the Declaration of Independence are evident in nature and the distortion of our environments and people. As the government continues to deplete and exploit environmental spaces, they find themselves needing to blame and shift their destruction unto to someone else. They have cultivated a divide and conquer rhetoric that the dominant American society has accepted as truth. The mainstream environmental movement has repeated a similar model in their narratives, texts, and visuals of nature and brown bodies. *Campesin@s* with a migrant background are part of the group that the environment movement targets, portraying them as threats contributing to environmental crises. Ray expands upon the ways that mainstream environmental thought ignores certain communities and environments; it treats certain human groups as contaminating the notion of purity and expresses this disgust or fear in corporeal terms (2013). The mainstream environmental movement has created a language of division between brown bodies and white, pristine wilderness spaces. It is a language that has created further borders among people and nature. The U.S.- Mexico border is not the only border that separates brown bodies entering American soil; imagery borders that the U.S. has constructed and the mainstream environmental movement restates are barriers that have cause division.

Similarly, in *Mexican Americans and the Environment: Tierra y Libertad*, Devon Peña exemplifies how social construction of nature has translated into texts, narratives,

and discourse that articulate power, meaning, and living in the world (2005).

Furthermore, Peña elaborates how culture and social position form ideologies of nature, influencing people's lives and material experiences of places (2005). In regards to Mexican Americans, Peña (2005) expands how these groups of people were affected by the creating of wilderness, stating:

The Mexican American people had a different experience with wilderness. In the land grant communities at the time of Pinchot and Muir, wilderness was inhabited, a wild but familiar place. It was home. It was not a mere natural resource, a commodity, or an empty and unknown space. Nature was inseparable from civilization, an intimate and intricately interconnected part of it. (20)

Peña illuminates how Mexican American people have a long standing relationship with land because they once belong to it. Mexican American people did not see the need to protect nature because they were already caring for it. Throughout the years of division and alienation Mexican American people have had to find ways to reconnect and fight for what was once part of them. Some Mexican American people were able to reconnect with their environment through movements such as the Environmental Justice (EJ) movement.

There is a tremendous amount of work done by the EJ movement. Activists, artists, educators, writers, students, and individuals have dedicated their life to such a vital movement, addressing the social justice aspect of green spaces. The green spaces that many environmentalists categorized as pristine and untamed is what people of color call "places where we work, where we worship, where we learn, where we go to

school”.¹⁰ The EJ movement has fought together with marginalized groups to bring social justice to their communities, while shedding light on the environmental racism that has occurred; it now has a proper name, as Michele Roberts co-director of Environmental Justice and Health Alliance identifies as environmental genocide. Long before the EJ movement ignited the protest against pesticide usages in the fields, *campesin@s* became one of the first EJ activist. The work of Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farm Workers and Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee was made up of fundamental leaders that fought for *campesin@s* to have a work site free of pesticides and fair work wages. There is still much work to be done, for instance making sure that Assembly Bill 1066- *camepsin@s* are paid overtime after 8 hour day or 40 hour standard work week, becomes active in 2019 and keeping agricultural companies accountable when *campesin@s* die in their fields due to heat exhaustion. ¹¹ Environmental Justice work and the *campesin@s*’ fight cannot be divorced as they intertwine.

Solis Ybarra elaborates how poll results tend to emphasize Latin@s’ concern for environmental justice (2016). Yet Solis Ybarra strives to expand the conversation beyond its numbers and results as Latin@s’ relationship with the environment goes further than environmental injustice, which are evident in their unique values and principles (2016). Similar to how *campesin@s* carry a distinct understanding and relationship with the environment. In my research, I focused on such pivotal aspects and strived to expand the

¹⁰ My work here was shaped by Michelle Roberts, co-director of Environmental Justice and Health Alliance

¹¹ When volunteering with UFW Foundation in June 2016 I learned about AB 1066 and a *campesino* dying due to heat exhaustion

conversation beyond the environmental justice or mainstream environmental movement discourse, as Ybarra calls for.

Campesin@s' stories are not monolingual; they are told in numerous languages and beyond our militarized borders. It is a well-known story that has been reiterated in our country, told from different perspectives and countless groups, yet has been neglected and dismissed in various forms. Unless we do not thoroughly address the marginalized communities, such as the *campesin@* community, and stop treating *campesin@s* as foreign objects, we will continue to repeat our mistakes. Michele Roberts states, "We need to take care of each other. Because the earth can take care of itself- always has and always will. We cannot shift our burden to others" (2017). An essential aspect of my research was to be involved in the fields where *campesin@s*' work and their realities became transparent. I had a small, yet fundamental understanding of the world that *campesin@s* live, which made evident the knowledge they have to offer. I found *campesin@s* to be the true social scientists of this field, dedicating their time and lives to the actual fields. The fields in which my parents once toiled were the same fields that I returned to conduct research. Regardless of not claiming the fields during my upbringing and leaving them for college, it was inevitable that the fields that I once was ashamed of were critical to my growth and scholarship. In a similar light, academia and the fields intersect and provide knowledge to one another- resulting in a form of transfiguration.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Epistemology

The two case studies that I have centered my research around have sentimental value and community attachment as both cities were pivotal to my upbringing and growth. Santa Maria is the community that raised me and Salinas is the community where I began noticing the hostile, self-hatred patterns that I had developed over my adolescent years. As a Chicana, indigenous, first generation, brown woman I found myself in a society and educational system that did not value individuals like myself. In junior year of high school there was not enough time to read about the Mexican history in the U.S. or the Chicano movement; that day our class only read two paragraphs about Cesar Chavez's contribution to the Chicano movement. I began questioning why our voices were left out of the lesson plans and why everything I read was heavily emphasized to glorify a dominant group. According to Thomas Schweizer, "Epistemology discusses the general problems of how we can know something and what knowledge is," (1998, 40). The knowledge that is dispersed continues to be controlled by the dominant group who disseminates partial, biased knowledge while framing the non dominant groups inferior to them. Approaching my research with a Black Feminist epistemology angle will surface the factors that the *campesin@* community are subjugated to. Black Feminist epistemology demands the integration of feminist standpoint while taken into account gender, race, and class as factors that are prevalent to understanding the disciplinary

domain of power and oppression. With the researcher and the researched being on opposite sides, feminist standpoint approaches deconstruct hierarchal structures and refrain from reproducing oppressive paradigms (Hesse-Biber, et al., 2004). Both the researcher and the researched need to be in the same platform in order to advance *together*, both require to be equally treated and valued. For example, Patricia Hill Collins addresses the concept of the “outsider within” by illustrating how black women have exposed white power from their personal experiences and narratives of working as domestic workers in the households of white families. This allows for a distinct perspective and insight on one’s self, family, and society (2000). This perspective is inherent to the Black Feminist theory as ‘outsider within’ is an alternative way of seeing and approach to integrate a distinct perspective from marginalize groups by utilizing their ‘outsider within’ status. I am using Black Feminist theory for my theoretical framework and the ‘outsider within’ concept to map my thoughts and arguments. With these two approaches I could not only assess my culture from a feminist standpoint rooted in an understanding of race and class but provide a means to bring forward social change among my community.

Colleagues, coworkers, and *campesin@s* have expressed that too often the work that is being conducted on *campesin@s*, the agriculture industry, and the complex aspects of immigrants and their migration to the U.S. is framed and written by white scholars, who have no relationship or exposure to the *campesin@* community. The experiences of these people has led them to become subjects for research and academia purposes, inevitably provoking a demand that individuals born into such realities should be the

primary authors of these accounts. Patricia Hills Collins and Black Feminist Thought challenge the dissemination of knowledge and the selective few that write the accounts of others. Collins (2000) states that:

Theory of all types is often presented as being so abstract that it can be appreciated only by a select few. Though often highly satisfying to academics, this definition excludes those who do not speak the language of elites and thus reinforces social relations of domination. Educated elites typically claim that only they are qualified to produce theory and believe that only they can interpret not only their own but everyone else's experiences. Moreover, educated elites often use this belief to uphold their own privilege (vii).

A top-bottom approach has heavily been exemplified among many marginalized communities, given credit to objective researchers who follow the dominant positivist model that aim to "save" communities from their perpetual catastrophes. While disregarding the knowledge that the community members have to contribute, as they are not validated due to the lack of title or education. Simultaneously, members of the community will not openly share if there is an absence of respect and camaraderie between the community members and researcher, whom are often seen as outsiders of *their* worlds. To elaborate, the objective researcher can never fully grasp the oppression that the members of the community are facing regardless of how much he/she "studies" them or lives their realities. Furthermore, the researcher, that has no connection to *campesin@s*' struggles, will be limited as their experience with oppression is temporal. If

the objective researcher focus is to collect data for the purpose of reliability or gain “useful” knowledge for the dominant group then there will be a false commitment to help overcome the oppression the *campesin@* community continue to face.

In *Racing Research, Researching Race* France Winddance Twine draws parallels of her ethnography in Brazil of racial and color hierarchies to the conventional research methods literature on field research. Twine discusses the importance of ethnical, emotional, analytical, and methodological dilemmas generated by racial subjectivities, racial ideologies, and racial disparities. Twine’s work illustrates how essential is for field researchers and ethnographers, even those whose research is not primarily centered with racial disparities, will consider the significance of race as methodological issue (2000, 5). Researchers who follow the dominant positivist model whether white or non white need to discern when their skills would best apply as facilitators rather than researchers. Robert Blauner and David Wellman (1998) argue for generating a “legitimate methodological need” not to “improve research methodologies”, striving for integration of racial and ethnic minorities into the social scientific community:

Social scientists realize the need for a series of deep and solid ethnographies of Black and Third World Communities, and for more penetrating analyses of the cultural dynamics, political movements and other contemporary realities of the oppressed racial groups. Today the best contribution that white scholars could make toward this end is not firsthand research but the facilitation of such studies by people of color. We must open up the graduate schools in every discipline to Black,

Chicano, Puerto Rican and other minority people, particularly those with strong ties and loyalties to their ethnic communities. (329)

I am approaching my thesis with an ‘outsider within’ angle as I come from a marginalized community, hoping to contribute to a narrative that I am part of. Researchers that have little to no community attachment or identity formation among such communities reinforce a gap in literature. Collins defines outsider-within locations as social locations or border spaces marking the boundaries between groups of unequal power. Individuals acquire identities as “outsiders within” by their placement in these social locations (2000). By acquiring an ‘outsider within’ identity due to social structures that control our pattern of thinking and dictate our relations with one another, our identities are often manipulated. I reject the Eurocentric world-view that has attempted to enslave me by preordaining me an identity and way of living. Furthermore, I withdraw from the white dominant narrative structure that must be told to appease the colonial, dominant group. In the words of Collins “Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. The requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of dominant groups” (2000: vii).

This research aims to transcend a framework that does not fit the mold or in this case a colonized academic model that we must continue to dismantle by challenging it with our writing and voices. In addition to decolonizing frameworks an epistemology that compliments the informants and the work they are contributing to the research must take

place, not the other way around. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber et al. state that “an epistemology is a ‘theory of knowledge’ and a philosophical theory that represents a fundamental belief system about who can be a knower and what can be known” (2004, 5). Traditional approaches validate research that is directed, decided, and conducted by the researchers themselves, thus naturalizing top down approaches. Decolonization occurs when challenging traditional approaches with non-traditional epistemologies, reconstructing towards a more inclusive knowledge production. Hesse-Biber et al. expand on such concept when stating “By questioning these traditional approaches to research feminist epistemology looks at the process of knowledge production through the research relationship itself, recognizing knowledge that is situated within lived experience and outside of scientific truth” (2004, 7). With a Black Feminist approach, I aim to create transparency while understanding that my own privileges and biases might come with limitations.

Positionality

I come from a marginalized community that has been given the title *La Tijuana*, it also known as Little TJ. It was given such name as the majority of residents that live in that community are Latinos or from Oaxaca, Mexico. Although I come from an underserved community I have had the privilege of receiving an education, furthering my education in higher institutions and among research work, having a better understanding of how our world functions. I find myself within a matrix of oppression and resistance where only my community and myself can truly liberate me from the dominant,

oppressive group that has attempted to subordinate me by silencing my voice. I will further discuss my disadvantages and privileges in my positionality section.

Both my parents worked in the fields when they arrived to the states. My father was a *piscador* [a strawberry harvester] for 3 years in Nipomo, CA. I remember growing up feeling ashamed of my roots and even worse of the community that raised me. I was 14 years old when I began bleaching my skin. I used a product called Sally Hansen Extra Strength Creme Hair Bleach for Face & Body, its purpose is to brighten your dark hairs from your face and body. When I started using the product I realized that my skin tone slightly turned lighter. I remembered instant satisfaction. I used this product for 10 years. I did not see this behavior as problematic, as societal standards of beauty privilege being white with blue eyes and blonde hair. Not until my last year of undergrad college did I start to understand the complexity of such hostile framework of thinking towards my self-image and the community that I was raised in. With exposure to the history of my *raza*'s [people] struggle, and the discovery of a sense of belonging and self-identity, I began embracing the community that had raised me. Yet my brown complexion would cause stares, my thick accent would make people ask to repeat myself, and the cultures that I pertained were partially and self-interested welcomed into our hegemonic society and certain discourses. To elaborate, the U.S. culture indulges in cultural appropriating while eating Latin-American foods and participating in painting their faces for *Dia de Los Muertos*, Day of the Dead. Furthermore, the U.S. culture has began eating organic, fresh fruits and vegetables, a good majority of these people like calling themselves environmentalists yet neglect the people that are part of their indulgence- the hands that

labor over the work that harvest their foods- *campesinos*. This whole paragraph is so powerful—and your writing is very clear.

I have an understanding of why there is division, hierarchies, and destructive mentalities as I come from a *campesin@* and a *Latin@* community that have been the byproduct of such destruction. I only ever saw myself and my community from a Eurocentric worldview. I grew up hating the complexion of my skin, my accent, and belonging to Latino cultures. Being brown, Latina, and with Spanish as my native tongue and parents that just crossed the border to the United States, all entails a strenuous identity discovery and transformation. One that I like to call multi-consciousness, drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois' double consciousness: "It is a particular sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others...One ever feels this twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (1900, 62). In my own journey of trying to comprehend who I was in this so-called melting pot, I began to develop a multi-consciousness that encompassed my threeness- an American, Latina, and Chicana. I was born in this country, yet I was raised by two parents that came from two different worlds, values, and ideologies. Growing up, all I strived was to be unnoticed and fit in. Yet, I as I began to expand my circle of friends and communities I began to realize how awkwardly I stood out.

I hope to share this crucial, personal experience and process with both the *campesin@* and Latino community that raised me. I am inspired to do the work laid out

in *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, for example, a Chicano plan for higher education that was written during the 1960s Chicano Movement, states that “Chicanismo simply embodies an ancient truth: that man is never closer to his true self as when he is close to his community. Chicanismo draws its faith and strength from two main sources: from the just struggle of our people and from an objective analysis of our community’s strategic needs,” (1969, 50). Going back to the community that raised me was crucial component of my thesis as it allowed me to understand the complexity of what *campesin@s* go through and the how their oppression is a racialized hierarchy. My insights, education, and privileges have limitations and a form of separation, yet by acknowledging such factors I understand both my position and relation to the community I engaged with. At the same time, I do not consider myself an expert in this field nor that I am an “authority” of this marginalized community. I do not consider myself as *the voice* of these people but part of their voices. This is a collective work filled with narratives and voices that I hope to channel effectively to bring justice to the stories that need to be heard.

Once starting research I discovered the complexity of not only understanding one’s identity but the process of obtaining a concrete identification. On my first day of research with the UFW Foundation I found out that the Foundation offers a type of identification to people that are in need of another form of identity in order to open a bank account, legal work purposes, and other numerous reasons. However, some people have no record of identification, such as birth certificate or passport. When these people migrate to the U.S. they do not find the necessity or are in urgency to leave their country that they do not bring with them any type of identification. It took a while to process that

this. Having one form of identification is troublesome, having no identification is looked down upon, as authorities need to know who you are, what your record is, and whether you are legally in this country. I began to think what kind of thoughts and anxieties *campesin@s* had in regards to this process of migration and arrival to the U.S. I later was able to have a better understanding of this journey when I conducted “participant observation” in the strawberry fields. When I conducted my research over the summer, I left the fields with two paychecks, a heart that broke, a soul that has been liberated, and a mind that says we won’t stop until there is justice for my *raza*. I took with me that one day, their- *our*- narratives will reach a high volume of people bringing a more through, richer understanding of what *campesinos* go through and the complexity of the situation.

Methods

In order to represent the work, narratives, and knowledge I learned from *campesin@s* I will employ a diverse set of qualitative research methods, as “no single method can grasp all the subtle variation in ongoing human experience. Consequently qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This research is situated in two agricultural cities that are located in the central coast and are 157 miles apart. Salinas, CA and Santa Maria, CA have some similar demographics yet differentiate with diverse elements that contribute towards the formation of *campesin@s*’ identity. Salinas, CA is known as the “Salad Bowl of the World”, with a 72.6% Latino population and a 24% agriculture

industry presence (City-data, 2016). Salinas consists of a high populated region of *campesin@s* but is different than several agricultural areas as the presence of the 1960s union- United Farm Workers (UFW) is located at the heart of Salinas. In Salinas, I centered my work on the impact of social movements, the history of UFW within this community, the services that UFW provides to the Salinas community, and the intricate aspects that shape *campesin@s*' identity. While UFW has been found to have some contradictions as an organization I evaluated UFW with a critical lens and found many aspects that are of contribution to both my research and the *campesin@* community.

The second portion of my fieldwork was conducted in Santa Maria, CA. Santa Maria is considered an agricultural region where many farmers have invested their business as it has promising results. Joe Leonard CEO of Bonipak an agriculture company located in Santa Maria grows, harvests, cools, processes and ships millions of cartons of fresh vegetables to retailers, wholesalers and foodservice customers all over the world (Bonipak, 2016). To farmers, Santa Maria Valley is known for its rich, fertile soil and mild year-round climate; it has been a city where farmers could gain profits and make worth of their identity. To be a farmer is to give praise and consider both a national and global citizen as it gives back to its country and foreign nations. To *campesin@s* Santa Maria Valley is a town where they are able to work and provide for not only themselves or their immediate family but also their extended family that they have left behind. Yet, such courage and selfless act is not appraised nor given validation, on the contrary, their lives are always valued less than human and their identity is nothing more but a status, illegal. Many U.S. citizens have turned away from seeing this group of

people as humans with worth and names. Instead, what mainstream media and the U.S. government reiterates is that these individuals do not belong in our workforce, do not belong in our history, and are not welcomed in our country. For example, rhetoric from the current U.S. president, Donald Trump, has cultivated great fear in the lives of undocumented immigrants and the children that were able to qualify for residence through the Dream Act. Prior to him being elected president, he addressed the pressing issue of immigration, stating that “This election is our last chance to secure the border, stop illegal immigration, and reform our laws to make your life better” (Collinson; Diamond; Trump, 2016). However, in such a statement lies great contradiction, for removing this group of people spawns a set of repercussions. In this case it would be the fall of the agricultural industry, which Latin@s, immigrants, and undocumented people comprise. To the labor that *campesin@s* contribute, consisting of over 30,000,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010), to the produce that Americans expect to be on their plates, the fruits that *campesin@s* bear would cease to exist. I wanted to further explore the dominant media that negate the voices that work and narrate the realities of what is going in the fields. Thus, I partook in participant observation where I was able to have a better grasp of *campesin@s*’ realities and my identity through the personal narratives and work ethics of *campesin@s*. In this segment of my research, I focused on identity formation, how immigration policies affect *campesin@s* lives, and the level of awareness that *campesin@s* have on their work rights.

My research is divided into three sections: Part I: Participant Observation in the United Farm Workers (UFW) Foundation in Salinas, CA. Part II: Participant Observation

in the UFW Union Salinas, CA. Part III: Participant Observation in the Strawberry Fields in Santa Maria, CA. This research was conducted during the summer. For each participant observation, I kept a notebook to journal the beginning and end of my day. By the end of every participant observation sections I conducted semi-structured interviews.

Part I: Participant Observation in Salinas, CA_ UFW Foundation

Part I of participant observation in the UFW Foundation happened during the first 4 weeks of my research. I would be at Foundation office from 9-1, 5 days out of the week. I served as a volunteer seeing the legal services that the Foundation offers to *campesin@s* and the community. The last words that were said to me in the Foundation were by Martiza, the service provider assistant. Martiza informed Juan, the Foundation's supervisor, my reason to work in the fields, Martiza said "She's going to go work in the fields. She doesn't want to hear about what the *campesinos* do. She wants to do what *campesinos* do. She wants to experience it for herself". Martiza has been one of the most supportive people for my work in the fields. Everyone else thinks I will not last working in the fields for 4 weeks or has wished me luck, as I will need it. One of my best friends told me "Good luck because you're going to die". I knew their remarks came from understanding the strenuous, laborious work I'm going into, making this part of research more essential. It has more meaning than simply conducting research or producing a thesis. It is a means of understanding more of where I come from and having a deeper understanding of what this group of people continues to go through, till this day.

In the beginning of my research I wanted to seek the answers to the questions: What contributes to the identity of a *campesin@*? What constitutes and makes a community among *campesin@s*? Why do some community members engage and help one another? Why are some parents so involved or supportive in their children's education or future? And how does this all play an important role in contributing to the environmental discourse? I volunteered with UFW Foundation for 4 weeks from Monday to Friday 9-1pm. The Foundation was walking distance to where I was living and I was able to sometimes witness when *campesinos* would get off early from work as they rode in a big brown bus that was owned from the company they worked for. These *campesinos* were contracted, meaning that they were probably under the H-2A visa; they lived in hotels that were near the Foundation, in rooms that only were suppose to fit 2 persons but allowed for 4-6 men to live without no refrigerator and the bare necessities. As I walked by these hotels my heart sank thinking of how these people are treated as second class citizens, they were brought under a U.S. working visa yet treated with no value. This is one of many realities that my *raza* goes through, as they are marginalized and oppressed due to their legal status. These helped me narrow down my research questions to: What encompasses the formation of the *campesin@s*' identity in Salinas and Santa Maria? and How will understanding the complexity of the *campesin@s*' identity contribute to the environmental discourse in a manner that will integrate a more inclusive, accurate representation of the *campesin@*: What encompasses the formation of the *campesinos*' identity in Salinas and Santa Maria? and How will understanding the complexity of the *campesinos*' identity contribute to the environmental discourse in a manner that will

integrate a more inclusive, accurate representation of the *campesino* community? By focusing on these two questions I was able to emphasize on identity while exploring how knowing *campesin@s*' identity was pivotal to further expanding the environmental discourse.

Part II Participant Observation in Salinas, CA_ UFW Union

Part II of participant observation took place on the fifth week where I meet with one of the UFW union organizers. I was able to see how the Union organized with *campesin@s* that are part of the Union. Gustavo, is one of the UFW Union organizers who meets with *campesin@s* that have a union contract between the UFW and the company they are working for. As I begin asking Gustavo questions he tells me that it looks like I am interested and invested in what is taking place. He asks me more of my motives of wanting to volunteer with the Union, what this whole research is about and what will be the outcome of this whole thing I'm doing. I share with him that I care for *campesin@s* because they are a community that has been forgotten and marginalized because they have no papers, because they are brown. I shared with Gustavo that have a personal connection because my parents used to be *campesin@s* and it's the community that I grew up around. I never embraced such community as I was too embarrassed of my *raza*. My own insecurities, self hate towards my skin color and my accent, didn't allow me to see the beauty of our *gente*, people. There are some people in our *raza* that get caught up in the mix of confusion, division, and violence due to life, bad experiences, mainstream media brainwashing our *raza*, and societal structures and forces that are

constructing and implemented among our society. Yet our *gente* continue to go forward, *pa lante* as our *raza* says. Having the privilege to do some participant observation with the UFW Foundation and Union, prepared me to conduct further research that also entailed participant observation.

Part III Participant Observation in Santa Maria, CA- Strawberry Fields

Part III of participant observation consisted of moving down south to Santa Maria, CA where I filled the paperwork in order to work in the fields. I only worked for two weeks but those two weeks seemed like two months. I worked from 6:30am till 4:30pm, 10 hours. No overtime pay. The work schedule entails working from Monday through Saturday. Saturdays are shorter days--eight hour work shifts instead of 10 hours. I worked in the strawberry fields among *campesinos*, farm workers and for a brief second I was able to identify as a *campesina*. I felt the part, I looked the part, I even spoke the language. Yet, even calling myself a *campesina* didn't sound right. I only worked as a *campesina* for two weeks and I knew that once my research was over, I no longer depended on the fields. To many *campesin@s* the fields are everything. *Campesin@s* need the fields to survive- to make their ends meet, to provide a better future to their children, or to maintain their families, which at times are family members not only that reside in the U.S. but south from the border. I come from a community that has been oppressed and marginalized due to their skin color, native language, and legal status. Working along these people and *campesin@s* liberated and impacted me in so many ways. I was liberated by the strength of my *gente*. I became empowered by allowing

myself to be vulnerable in front of my *gente*. I worked among them and realized that the power that had been stolen since Colonialism had failed to endure as power and fire dwells in us. In the lyrics of B-side Players, a radical thought provoking band “El fuego carga su mensaje a todos los continentes. Revolución ya va llegando. Pa lante la gente del sol. Que viva la revolución” (2012). It translates, the fire carries its message to all continents. Revolution is on its way. Forward people of the sun. Long live the revolution.

I only was able to catch a glimpse of *their* world and while I might have several similar elements that identified me as a *campesina*, in many ways I could never truly understand the complexity of their oppression and marginalization. Collins describes identity politics as a way of knowing that see lived experiences as important to creating knowledge and crafting group-based political strategies. It is also a form of political resistance where an oppressed group rejects its devalued status (Collins, 2000). Collins elaborates how outsider-within locations are social locations or border spaces marking the boundaries between groups of unequal power. Individuals acquire identities as “outsiders within” by their placement in these social locations (2000). I had the advantage of knowing certain things before conducting research as I was raised in the community I researched, I grew up having interactions and relationships with *campesin@s*, and my father was once a *campesino*. All these factors opened my eyes, my mind, and heart to not only have a better understanding of this community but to *feel* and *standby* the *campesin@* community. All in all, people need to comprehend one’s personal narrative, if people lose their story they lose their sense of identity. The environmental discourse whether they know it or not is written off the *campesin@* story by not being inclusive and

humanize *campesin@s*. They are both intertwined in environmental discourse when noting the question, how does food get from the farm to the table? *Campesin@s* play a vital role in the middle passage of this process. One cannot have food without picking it. Noting that scholarly work on *campesin@* life and value are being conducted does not take away the power that the dominate narrative has built within the culture of this society. In short, it is hard to view the lenses of the *campesin@* identity in the realm of environmental discourse after years of oppressive dismissal of these people. My role is to let the personal narrative of the people being mentioned in this thesis be heard and continue to fight against the struggle of a hundred plus years of Colonized academic language and division. Division in the sense of what is and is not important in terms of who stories matter and who stories do not matter.

TABLES

Table 1: UFW Employees' Responses to relation among *campesin@s* & agricultural fields

UFW Employees	Q5.) How important is to work in the fields to be able to support a <i>campesin@s</i> 's family?
Martiza	Sometimes it's the only option they have.
Juan	It is a matter of circumstances. I don't think anyone says, I want to go and break my back. It depends on the area (you migrate) Salinas, agriculture is big here. L.A. it would be factory. It's not so much about the fields but <i>working</i> to support family.
UFW Employee1	It's very important. It also depends in the circle you are in. If you are working, you can't work 100% it has to be 200%.
Jasmine	It's important because it helps support one's family.
UFW Employee2	For people that do not have education it's important. They migrate, don't have any other option- it's essential. Families tend to stay together. Migrate and immigrate is different. They migrate with the harvest. It is a way of life. It's important to understand their culture in the Foundation. We might have different cultures.
UFW Employee3	If given the opportunity it is very important. Certain families only have one member that is able to support them.

Table 2: UFW employees' responses to *campesin@s*' role

UFW Employees	Q.10) Do <i>campesin@s</i> hold a stake in or play a role in preserving the earth's resources we live in?
Martiza	Yes the <i>campesinos</i> are the ones that work on it. You need the labor hand and its <i>fruits</i> in order to work the land.

UFW Employees	Q.10) Do <i>campesin@s</i> hold a stake in or play a role in preserving the earth's resources we live in?
Juan	Yes and no. They do understand conservation, those that have always been farmers. But one get here they're workers. They have the knowledge to conserve. But it depends on their position.
UFW Employee 1	I think so. They know the land. If they had access to land they would cultivate it without doing so much harm to it.
Jasmine	They do since they are the ones that spray pesticides but not by choice. Following directions. More of an indirect way than a direct way.
UFW Employee 2	They understand how the land, crops function. Many have a background. They do understand. Tie it with conservation might not fully understand. Crops being irrigated, might be a different approach in preserving/conserving lands. Need to ask them.
UFW Employee 3	Somewhat 50/50. Campesinos are out there a lot they could participate in preserving the land, in part of what they do. The owner of the land does part.

Table 3: UFW Employees' responses on *campesin@s* contribution to the environment

UFW Employees	Q44c.) How do you think the <i>campesino</i> community can contribute to the environmental discourse?
Martiza	They are able to help maintain and tend the land.
Juan	If they share their knowledge, like organic. If they can educate the community how to install irrigation systems. If they can find a way to share their knowledge such as a task course for <i>campesinos</i> , have a representative. But sometimes competition gets in the way.
UFW Employee 1	If you educate.. The ones that have the power are the rangers on what they are going to put on the land. The Union and

UFW Employees	Q44c.) How do you think the campesino community can contribute to the environmental discourse?
	farmworkers can enforce laws to protect lands with their participation you can bring changes.
Jasmine	Throw away trash. Less plastic usage. Pesticides, don't put them on land. But that is not their (campesinos) fault.
UFW Employee 2	They are. They are seeing the effects or living it. Environment it's a big scope, it can be water, pollution. There's been a lot of miscarriages because of the water that is being irrigated. Farm workers are advocating. A lot of them understand. There should be a lot of education on how it can affect them, the products that their purchasing. Looking at the long term effects not just the short term effects.
UFW Employee 3	Some people do respect the value of land. There is a lack education, such as why is protecting the land valuable not just food. Advocating for that is needed.

Table 4: Campesin@s' Identity Responses

Campesin@s	Question 12	Question 13	Question 14
Campesino Fresco	N/A	Experiences, people, & sickness	Yes, its part of my persona.
Campesina Doña Jasmine	Good work ethics	N/A	No, working as a campesina or in another type of job, I'm still the same person.
Campesino Villa	Names	People	No. It's just work. Also, haven't work long enough to claim the title.
Campesino Jorge	Person, like everyone else.	My dad. Taught me a lot of things	No, anyone could work in the fields.
Campesino Herberito	Difficult to answer. I guess it would identify as a man.	Work. Didn't want to be bad or be caught up in things that weren't good.	Yes. I know how to do everything.
Campesina Fuerza	Deriving from the countryside.	Parents. Taught me to value work.	Yes, its part of where I come from. My roots are there.

Campesin@s	Question 12	Question 13	Question 14
Campesino Lucino	Work	Parents & grandparents. Shared with me their story.	No, its a job.
Campesino Reservado	Origins to one's roots	People from my roots.	Yes. My parents were campesinos, survived because of the fields.
Campesino Gabriel	Mexican, not trying to be someone else.	People	No. Your identity is one thing & campesino is another thing.
Campesino Javier	Where I'm from, where I'm going, & Know who I'm here for.	People	No, it does not define you.
Campesino Roberto	Know who you are & what you want	People	No, it's just a job. It does not mean you are different.

Table 5: Campesin@s & Entities

Campesin@s	Question 22	Question 23	Question 28
Campesino Fresco	Doing straight.	Good social security	Yes they are partners. The U.S. calls <i>La Migra</i> .
Campesina Doña Jasmine	To have papers.	Having papers. In this country you have to everything legally.	They do work together. US & immigration, along with the police. Because if they (the police) gives someone a ticket for whatever reason, the first thing the police does is ask "Do you have papers?" "No". You get your sentence, they hand over you to immigration, & they deport you.
Campesino Villa	Its not right for someone to be illegal. We all need to be equal.	Passing without a permit.	Yes all the time. At times I think that <i>La Migra</i> will arrive at the ranch (at the fields). It'll be over for me. I recently arrived here & there's many opportunities. And to loose them all in an instant. For one its over. And then again you have to start over.

Campesin@s	Question 22	Question 23	Question 28
Campesino Jorge	(Illegal)Like an alien. Like someone that doesn't belong somewhere.	(Illegal)A person that doesn't looks like they shouldn't be in the U.S.	I think they work together because if someone gets stopped or jail time they get reported. So that's when they call immigration.
Campesino Herberito	Has many benefits. Not discriminated as much.	Being here without any fear.	Well they are taking care of their country. You think of them (La Migra) a lot because you are not sure when they will take you away.
Campesina Fuerza	To be good in society. Not to worry so much about your future as you're secure of yourself.	Aside from having many benefits you can have a lot of opportunities. We think of our children & their opportunities. Even though they are born here you still worry because you aren't. You leave them alone when you are at work.	They work together.
Campesino Lucino	Means a lot of things. Used to be that if you didn't have papers you didn't have work. At times you're scared of walking in the streets. Having a good social security.	In my son's school's meetings they ask who has papers. They separate us to see who has a driver's license or who could help them out (with school events).	Oh yes. Everytime when you come from there to here that is what you're thinking. The only fear that you have when come from over there to here is <i>La Migra</i> .
Campesino Reservado	Complete at work. It means two things but I'm not going to mention the other one.	Its important to have it in this country. You need to obey the laws.	La Migra is part of the U.S. It's here. La Migra comes & seperates.
Campesino Gabriel	Being part of this nation.	It means to be one less undocumented.	They are only fulfilling the job that the U.S. is giving them.
Campesino Javier	To not cross so many puddles (being sarcastic as he is referring to the Rio Grande). Not have to think about so many deserts. To be legal I	No longer having to live in clandestine in this country.	Well yes because they are doing their job so that no more people will come to their country. Thus, they do have a relation to protect the

Campesin@s	Question 22	Question 23	Question 28
	would be able to be back in my town & be able to see my parents. To be legal leaves you to your imagination.		well being of their country.
Campesino Roberto	I would have papers & wouldn't have to cross like a "wetback". To be able to come & go.	To have all the privileges. To be able to help your family.	They do have a relation as they serve one another to protect their country together.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter examines two case studies of research conducted in Salinas, California and Santa Maria, California. In both, I focused on the importance of narrative, the first told by an organization that works closely with the *campesin@* community, and the second is a collection of *campesin@* narratives. In the first case study, the research consists of two parts that take place in United Farm Workers (UFW) Foundation and Union. In the second case study, I centered my research in the strawberry fields, thereby studying both “up” (at an institutional level) and “down” (at the level of the workers themselves). Throughout my research, I used participatory research methods and adhered to Paulo Freire’s (1982) guidance:

If I perceive the reality as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, then I have to use methods for investigation which involve the people of the area being studied as researchers; they should take part in the investigation themselves and not serve as the passive objects of the study (34).

Freire’s words resonated with my research as I recognized that *campesin@s* were the only ones who could speak for themselves, and I had to learn from what they were saying. With Freire’s words in mind, I used participatory research to help me identify where *campesin@s* stood in the process of the three strategies of participatory research: 1) the reappropriation of knowledge (within the paradigm of knowledge) 2) development of that knowledge, and 3) participation in social production (Gaventa 1988, 122). It was essential for me to use participatory research, as I aimed to challenge the roles of

“research and researched and the subjects-objects of knowledge production” not only for academic purposes but for personal and communal reasons. From a more personal account, as I present the research findings and analyze the outcomes, I include my thoughts and feelings that were provoked during fieldwork. To refrain in order to remain objective would perpetuate the very thing I aim to challenge, the dominant narrative, which would suggest that I, the researcher, am a neutral observer gaining some unique access to “truth” about the *campesin@s*’s lives. I realize now that the voices of people, like my father and grandfather, and their experiences all directed me that they are the true scholars of this study. Far too often, these voices are muted by the dominant narrative because they threaten to challenge that narrative, when they should be at the forefront if we are researchers claiming to portray their realities.

I never recognized people like my father and grandfather’s knowledge of working in the fields as being critical to my growth as an educator, activist, and community member. K-12 did not teach me to acknowledge their work as indispensable to society, nor to identify them as instructors of my education. Because they lack a higher education, my father and grandfather are not validated educators or critical contributors to the knowledge produced. Instead, I was taught that my father and grandfather are cheap and indispensable labor. John Gaventa, in *Toward a Knowledge Democracy: Viewpoints on Participatory Research in North America*, states how research is viewed not only as a means of creating knowledge; it is simultaneously a tool for education and development of consciousness as well as mobilization for action (1998). Serving as a researcher, I saw how interlocked *campesin@s* knowledge and environmental discourse were. I saw how

personal narrative not only empowers an individual but how it can transform and even transcend one's community. The following case studies demonstrate how overlapping and interdependent they are to another. In addition, the studies will indicate how *campesin@s*, although not claiming to be educators, are scientists, leaders, and teachers of their profession.

Case Study I: United Farm Workers Foundation- Salinas, CA

The first case study focused on qualitative research at the United Farm Workers (UFW) Foundation. For four weeks, my work centered on understanding how such an established organization serves the *campesin@* community and the role they play in *campesin@s*' lives. Within the four weeks, I learned the information and services UFW Foundation provided to the *campesin@* community, how that information is disseminated, and the type of relationship that *campesin@s* have with the Foundation. I gathered data by participant observation, journaling, and semi-structure interviews that I conducted in the last week.

My initial inquiry was answered during the semi-structured interviews with UFW Foundation employees when asked the following questions: Q1. What has been the most given services that people have been asking from the UFW Foundation? Q2. How does UFW Foundation serve its community?, and Q3. How is the UFW perceived and treated among the community? (the complete interview guide is included in the **Appendix section**). I summarized the responses and included the recurrent responses for all three questions. For question number one, the services most wanted were immigration and

citizenship. For question number two, the Foundation serves the *campesin@* community by providing immigration services, education on immigrant rights, and education on social rules to avoid jeopardizing their stay in the U.S. Some UFW employees expressed that the Foundation has served by supporting and being a bridge to the *campesin@* community. This is an essential component for both the Foundation and the *campesin@* community to have in order for their relationship to exist. In the second case study I discuss how being part of such setting thoroughly prepared me for fieldwork in the strawberry fields. For question number three, the *campesin@* community perception of the Foundation is divided as some *campesin@s* are very supportive of the Foundation while others are skeptical; there are those that view the Foundation in a positive manner whereas others view it in a negative way. A UFW employee informed that this skepticism often derives from the *majordomos* [supervisors' assistants] who threatened to fire *campesin@s* if they visit UFW offices. One of the UFW employees stated that *majordomos* do not want *campesin@s* to know their rights, which is one of the services that the Foundation provides.

I asked the following question to the UFW employees to have a better understanding of the relation between *campesin@s* and agricultural fields Q5.) How important is to work in the fields to be able to support a *campesin@*'s family? The interviewees' responses can be found in **Table 1**.

While all UFW Foundation employees had different responses to question five, all answers carried a similar theme. Yes, working in the fields is important but what is at stake here is the opportunity that *campesin@s* see from working in the fields. The

temporary relief that *campesin@s* feel is they will be financially supporting and providing for their families. Yet, what is being compromised for this given opportunity is their health; health issues that come in increments- weeks that lead to months, and months that lead to years of back pains, never healing aches, exposure to pesticides- to name a few. According to Jose, UFW employee and supervisor, what too often is left out of the conversation when discussing *campesin@s* working in the fields is that “it is a matter of circumstances. I don’t think anyone says, I want to go and break my back. It depends on the area [you migrate] Salinas, agriculture is big here. L.A. it would be factory”. The issue here is not that “illegals” strive to steal American jobs, as media portrays. The problem is that *campesin@s* are left with minimal options. With their limited opportunities, they become a vulnerable labor force due to their legal status, ethnicity, and being economic refugees. *Campesin@s* leave their native home with either having a background of working and living in the country or are made *campesin@s* throughout the years of working fields. In both scenarios *campesin@s* are forced to adapt due to the circumstances they find themselves in. It is a matter of survival, not choice. This insight counters the narrative that *campesin@s* are the problem; their “choice” to migrate to the U.S. is not the problem; the problem lays in the reasons they had to migrate.

In order to have a better understanding who *campesin@s* are, we must listen to what they are sharing, but most importantly we must allow ourselves to connect with who they are as human beings with unique stories. If we are able to connect with *campesin@s*, we are able to live with them and accept that although they are from different lands they

are of existence and value in *every* land. They are not less human because they come from south of the border; their lives should not be measured by assumptions about the country they migrated from. We must see *campesin@s* as our equals, only then can we treat them as such. They have the knowledge and background that can contribute to the environmental discourse. To elaborate, when I state that *campesin@s* can contribute to environmental discourse I am intentionally not singling the food movement or the environmental movement. I am making a broad, not vague, critique to both movements and *all* movements that want to discuss about “progress” and “justice” yet, fail to include this group of people in their so called “environmental discourse”. I refer to environmental discourse because all the *campesin@s* that I interviewed did not know either movements. My purpose is not for *campesin@s* to get involved and become members of such movements. Many *campesin@s* I came across might not even be interested in partaking in these green movements because of the very thing I am arguing for- include the *campesin@s*’ narratives and voices into this environmental discourse. *Campesin@s* for the majority are not in the movements’ conversation or in their agenda. What I am challenging is that *campesin@s* be given spaces and opportunities to be part of this environmental discourse that needs to go further than the food movement or the environmental movement, *campesin@s* need to be in *all* conversations that talk about food and the environment. bell hooks discusses in her book, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, her use of the phrase ‘imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ to describe the interlocking political system that are the foundation of our nation’s politics (2004, 17). hooks expands that these terms are systems, not individual

people or groups as the term is conceptual and cannot refer to a specific person or group of people. In similar manner I challenge that the *campesin@s*' voices and narratives not only be listen by one individual, groups, or movements but be heard in all conversations as they all support, uphold, or perpetuate under the similar theme- environmental discourse. We cannot divorce the conversations and limit *campesin@s* narratives to only be included in the food movement or the environment movement, inevitably we will continue to have more movements and be scattered, instead of creating coalitions. The environmental movement, the food movement, the *campesin@* community all interlock as they all correspond to one another. Furthermore, opening this conversation to this group of people could bring self-determination and empowerment into their communities, as much as into our communities rather than continuing to alienate ourselves from *campesin@s*.

Interview question ten asked UFW employees regarding the role *campesin@s* play: Do *campesin@s* hold a stake in or play a role in preserving the earth's resources we live in? The UFW employees' responses are found in **Table 2**. UFW employees understand that *campesin@s* play a significant role in the fields. They recognize the background and knowledge that *campesin@s* bring to the fields but they also realize the potential that *campesin@s* have if given the opportunity. Juan stresses on the mental shift that *campesin@s* have adapted, from being farmers in their native lands to being laborers in the U.S. This mental shift takes place due our government and society placing worth on individuals not on their skills, intelligence, or knowledge. Instead, what is valued is one's ethnicity, skin color, and legal status. Our government and society fails to see

campesin@s as humans. They are written off as they are categorized as cheap labor, not human beings with their own motives, lives, and stories. What is of worth is the amount of profit that can be reaped from exploiting *campesin@s*. Juan notes when *campesin@s* arrive to the U.S. they are solely workers, emphasizing how *campesin@s* have the knowledge to conserve but it depends on their position.

The last question I analyzed was question 44 which asked UFW employees how the *campesin@* community could contribute to the environmental discourse allowed me to see more restrictions rather than empowerment. I intentionally chose to use the term environmental discourse in the interview guide to note if the informants were familiar with the term, they were unfamiliar with the term. When I clarified what the term meant the informants were quickly able to engage and respond to the question because they understood how such conversation pertain to *campesin@s*. UFW employees' responses are found in **Table 3**. By proposing that *campesin@s* contribute to environmental discourse we risk the flow of creativity and ideas that *campesin@s* can engage when discussing environmental issues that pertain to them. What I propose is to serve as facilitators and educators; for too long we, the research community, have imposed what is best for "them", telling subjects what they ought to do to improve their situation. What is best is not solutions from outsiders but from within the community. As an outsider within, I find myself that I am limited in adding to the conversation without jeopardizing the fluidity of genuine, untampered dialogues. By providing the space and times for *campesin@s* to interact with their community, they can begin to discuss the state of the agricultural environment.

UFW Employee #2 response to question 44 by stating that farm workers are advocating; explaining that farm workers understand the issues that are occurring not only because they are witnessing it but due to the fact that they are living it. UFW Employee #2 argues that education needs to cover how farm workers are being affected by the products they purchase; emphasizing that long term effects need to be discussed as much as short term effects. UFW Employee #3 highlights the need for more education and more people advocating for not only food but also land. Concurring with UFW Employee #3 along with advocating for land, we must advocate and demonstrate with the people that labor the land. Land and labor go hand in hand, in our country they are inevitable pair. In our society land that is not worked and harvest, is land wasted. By no means I am voicing that our society should determine what we should advocate and protect. On the contrary, we must dismantle society's proposed advocacy and decolonize how we mobilize in order to stand strong in what we are fighting for.

Case Study I: United Farm Workers Union- Salinas, CA

The union is only chosen by the people, *campesinos*. They have to vote, only the workers can decide, no representative of the Union or *mayordomo*, can vote for or against. The Union gives the *campesinos* voices. We are doctors, lawyers, we have to be everything. If we are not informed then we look bad in front of the worker, *campesino*. We need to be informed. Here we are more than organizers. We are sometimes marriage counselors.

Gustavo, UFW Union Organizer 2016

Doing participant observation with UFW union organizer Gustavo enabled me to see the many tasks that the Union has to take. Gustavo drove to us to many field sites to inform *campesin@s* how the Union serves the *campesin@* community. On other sites he provided *campesin@s* with any updates or took note of any concerns that *campesin@s* had with the company they worked with. Once we left the sites, Gustavo shared with me the daily fight he has as a union organizer: “We are fighting against a monster, with a lot of cash and many people that have low education that only listen to the *patroncito* [boss, but with endearment tone]. Who doesn’t want to be of support?”. Gustavo tells me how agricultural companies are diligent on just *using* workers and once they are done with *campesin@s*, they fire them. Gustavo informs me how “some companies even have gone to the extent of changing their company’s name. The companies use many strategies to make sure that *campesinos* don’t join the Union. But some *campesinos* are happy with simply getting *carne asada* [bbq] and a little raise, that the companies do as an incentive. Some *campesinos* ask me ‘What will the Union give me?’”. Gustavo responds back by saying there is strength in numbers.

Gustavo discloses that not all agricultural companies are ill-intended, explaining how there are several that do want look after the well being of their workers. Gustavo worked as a *campesino* for 16 years as a *piscador* until an UFW organizer approached his *cuadrilla* regarding signing a union contract between UFW and the company they worked for. From working as a *campesino* to becoming an organizer Gustavo has a thorough understanding of the strong coalition that takes place and the possibility of growing further if both parties are willing to collaborate. Simultaneously, Gustavo differentiate

how UFW is not there to be the solution but a tool to help the *campesin@* community combat the injustices they face in the fields.

While interviewing Gustavo in the Union office, I asked him about his identity. Gustavo's response was "My identity would be, well I hear a lot of being an American and saying that I am American. I could also say that my identity is American." I asked Gustavo if he could comment what contributes to his identity Gustavo state the following:

Well it's the territory that sounds bad. But the thing is that God gave us this earth. For someone to say that this all mine, who I'm I to say that... That is an abuse of mankind, just because they have firearms. Imagine when all this territory used to be Mexico. Myself being of this world, which God gave us this earth- the water, the air, everything. And look we can't even have a little piece to sleep. And the other one, you pass by their hills all because he is the general. What does it matter that I used to be a *campeon* [a champion, a given title that a *campesin@* wins after setting a record of picking the quickest and most produce in his/her *cuadrilla*] or that I knew *campeons* if we don't have a place to live. And the other one that is not a *campeon*, I don't see him killing himself under the sun. But he reigns over the whole planet, why, because he has firearms. I don't think God gave us weapons for them to come over here and reign [referring English and Spanish colonization]... All these laws are made by the ones that have power. It is as though there are two children, one child has two plates of food, the other one has none. What would you call that? That is where we are, we are defenseless.

We don't have anything to defend ourselves with. That's why we don't have anything. The only power that we do have is for people to say- we had enough. To stop working to see what they eat... We all eat from the earth.

Gustavo's words spoke volumes as he went full circle on his identity from the totality that took form of his identity to where he presently finds himself. Gustavo is not content with the mediocre wages and inequalities that *campesin@s* still face. Yet, he understands that this battle he is fighting cannot be won individually or from one union, it will take the *campesin@* community as a whole to revolutionize the current state they are in. I asked Gustavo how he thought society viewed *campesin@s*, and how accurate or inaccurate that perception was. Gustavo's response "Among the community (*campesin@*) they know. The only one that doesn't understand is the one that is not inside. That's the difference... They don't have much power as to make laws and that's why we have to fight for something just for us". I followed up with the question of what kind of affects do these perceptions have towards *campesin@s*. Gustavo replied:

They see them different. It's like something I buy and I don't know how it was built or fabricated. If you go to the fields and see them it seems as though they aren't doing anything. But once doing it (working) you'll feel it. It's not the same thing if you just stand for 10-20 minutes and looking, then if you end up for the rest of your life in the fields. It's different. Its only there than someone who doesn't understand will understand the life of working in the fields.

Gustavo's words encapsulate the history that our country has with the *campesin@* community while illustrating the condition that we still find ourselves in relation to our relationship with *campesin@s*. Gustavo's experience and insights served as cornerstones as I mentally and emotionally prepared myself for the fieldwork in Santa Maria.

Case Study II: Strawberry Fields- Santa Maria, CA

The second part of the case study consisted of conducting fieldwork for three weeks in Santa Maria. The first part of the case study was participation observation in the fields for 2 weeks and the last week I conducted interviews with *campesin@s*. When I partook in participation observation I immersed myself in the strawberry fields while I worked like a *campesin@*. If I wanted to have an understanding of who *campesin@* are, solely just watching how *campesin@s* worked would not do, I had to become one. This of course, is an overstatement, as my privileges would not allow me to become a *campesin@*. The privileges I gained are countless: My mother prepared my breakfast and meals for the day, my brother provided me with transportation, I am an American citizen who is fluent in English and pursuing a master degree. I found comfort in knowing that my livelihood did not depend on my job, fear of deportation was nonexistent, and a warm meal and hot Epsom salt bath was waiting for me at home every evening. I realized that my privileges would interfere and as much as I strived to know who *campesin@s* are, I could never truly know as I never truly became one. No one can, unless they decide to denounce all their privileges and rights. Research can only go so far unless the researcher asks the real researchers, in my case they were the *campesin@s*. I

remembered what I learned from UFW and witnessed how an effective, reciprocal relationship coexisted because there was a foundation of understanding, transparency, and trust from both ends. Yet, if I was to apply such method I had to do so with caution and sensitivity. Announcing who I was could have potentially brought up barriers and suspicion, and rightfully so. I humbled myself being as authentic and transparent as I could when given the time and space. I was in sacred grounds and if I was to be trusted, I had to remove my sandals to show respect to my fellow coworkers. I was a foreigner in their lands and if I wanted to learn from them then I had to listen. I was an outside-insider as my family started in the fields, picking strawberries and now I was continuing where my parents left off.

From K-12, I attended schools with classmates and friends that had parents that worked in the fields or they themselves would work in the fields during summer breaks. I grew up hearing the many challenges of working in the fields and watched how the news would bombard our society with how “illegal immigrants” were stealing American jobs. While, I never worked in the fields until last summer, I developed a conscience and compassion for the people that labor the lands that many non-people of color would dare to. I understood the importance of how being an outsider-insider would help me explore and better understand the connections between our environments and my *raza*. *La causa* (the cause) symbolizes the struggle that our *raza* has constantly being fighting, in the current state we find ourselves *la causa* has never been more vital and urgent.

La causa first took place in the fields when UFW organized *campesin@s* and activists to boycott grapes due to the excessive pesticide spraying that not only sprayed

the produce but also *campesin@s*. Yet the fight is not over, it must continue not only in the fields but also in our communities. While *campesin@s* may be less exposed to pesticides, they still are being affected by the residue of pesticides. The fight not only lies on terminating pesticide contact but enabling *campesin@s* to have a say on using organic, less harmful pesticide in general. *Campesin@s* are employees of the agricultural industry. Yet too often, it seems as though *campesin@s* are cattle, domesticated beasts used for profit and easily disposed once reached maximum yield. The environmental conditions and treatment of *campesin@s* are similar to the conditions and treatment that cattle endure. When conducting fieldwork at the strawberry fields in Santa Maria I witnessed how *campesin@s* worked for 10 hours with no overtime pay, had two 15-minute breaks, and one 30-minute lunch break. During breaks, neither shade nor tables were provided, thus, *campesin@s* would sit or lay down in the dirt to rest. Beside the three breaks, *campesin@s* remained working standing up with their backs bend all day. *Campesin@s* only receive benefits and insurance if they are part of a union. The majority of *camapesin@s* are not part of a union since it is not mandatory for agricultural companies to offer their employees. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was constructed to regulate minimum wage and overtime standards; however, this did not include agricultural workers (Ulloa and Myers, 2016). Furthermore, U.S. Representative Dana Rohrabacher has proposed that the U.S. government build a brick wall with electric wire on top, the purpose of which would be “to electrify these illegals not to kill them but

enough to scare them. Just like how it is done with livestock”.¹² This dehumanizing rhetoric coming from the country’s political leaders makes it difficult for the public to see *campesin@s* as U.S. workers, regardless their status or lack of work permit, as living, breathing human beings.

When working with my *cuadrilla*, work crew, and other *cuadrillas*, I learned there was a diverse set of backgrounds that worked in the fields. Besides the obvious that the majority of *campesin@s* were Latin@s and Spanish speaking, the age ranged from as young as 16 years to 70 years. Some *campesin@s* had years of experience while others had none. Each person was distinct with a different story of how they ended up working in the fields. Some viewed the job as quick money while others viewed it as hard earning money. Yet, besides the reason of them working in the fields, what matters here is the story of how they began working in the fields and why they remained there. Research that abides to the colonized framework, that avoids discussing the racial inequalities and systems of oppressions aspects, is quick to dismiss the story of the *campesin@*, rather it emphasizes on numbers or solutions. Furthermore, such research denies personal narratives as they continue to exclude these narratives in their work. The value that narratives bring is the start of humanizing people that too often are seen anything but humans. If we begin to listen and talk less we will learn that there is knowledge, wisdom, value- a beating human heart beneath the surface of the constructed, mechanical *campesin@* that corporations and the U.S. government strive to manufacture. If we apply

¹² Juan Carlos Frey. *800 Mile Wall*, 2009. Documentary was viewed in a sociology course.

relational instead of transactional approaches, including liberatory research methods, then we can build a coalition with our brothers and sisters in the fields. Francisco Jimenez author of *The Circuit*, and professor at Santa Clara University stated in community event *The Experience of the Immigrant: A Personal Story* “Your story is the history of this country” (2017). Jimenez was referring to the *campesin@s*’ and immigrants’ story that were among the audience, throughout his talk he recognizes how *campesin@s* and immigrants were the foundation and inspiration of his book. Jimenez exemplifies a camaraderie with the *campesin@* community because of his work and understanding of who *campesin@s* are. In similar light if we are to build a coalition with the *campesin@* community we must comprehend the work that must be done in order to build coalitions, we must begin in the fields- in the lands where we find *campesin@s*.

I learned how to work with my hands to alleviate some of the back pain- meaning I had to be quick with by hands in order to be able to finish my circuit and be able to take a water break. I learned how to laugh to ease my aches by joking around and sharing stories with my fellow comrades. I learned that at the end of the day, when *campesin@s* felt the heavy weight of working a 10-hour shift, without overtime pay, instead of complaining they would chuckle and say aloud “I’ve gotten lazy. I don’t want to work no more”. I could only respond by telling them “You haven’t gotten lazy. Your body is tired. You’ve worked so hard. It makes sense why you would want to stop”. They would smile back and reply “I guess you’re right. It’s almost time to home anyway *muchacha* [young woman]. You ready? When the *mayordomo* tells us ‘*Ya vamonos!*’ ‘Come on let’s go!’ We go”. I learned from their stories and experiences how to survive in the fields. The

pain never went away, like they told me, instead I had to find ways to cope with it by embracing it. I took about four ibuprofens and bought the *dragon* cream for aches like they recommended. Knowing that they pain would never go away rather the pain would be less severe each day, brought both hope and dismay at the same time. My pain would only be temporary as being a *campesin@* was not my livelihood, but for the *campesin@s*, the pain would always remain with them. They were much stronger than I was, not because they were born a certain way, but because they had to, they had no other choice. The last week of research completed the second part of the case study in Santa Maria. I conducted interviews with *campesin@s* resulting in a small sample group. I realize that my sample is a small percentage and that the proportion yield is less than 99%. However, after going into the field and conducting interviews I recognized that although my proportion only represented less than 1%, I had reach the point of data saturation. I had interviewed a sufficient amount of informants, transcribing and analyzing 11 interviews. In order to underline the variables and interpret the responses of my interviewees, I selected the most prominent and relevant questions regarding identity, *campesin@s*' relation to the land, and what being a *campesin@* meant to them. The following questions, Q. 12, 13, and 14 (the complete interview guide is included in the **Appendix**) were the questions chosen to bring insight to the first research question. These questions were asked as a direct approach of inquiring what identity meant to *campesin@s*. I wanted *campesin@s* to share their perspective on I.C.E., legalization, and entities in order to examine whether these variables affect them in regards to their identity. However, understanding the sensitivity of the topics I took in consideration that I had I pose the

questions in a more indirect manner. Questions 22, 23, and 28 exemplify the take and stance that *campesin@s* have toward all three topics.

Campesin@s and Identity

Asking Q.12 “What does identity mean to you?” caught many informants off guard which several could not answer. The question could have been too ambiguous or a question that they never were asked before. The interviewees’ responses can be found in **Table 4**. Interviewees’ response to identity were the following: understanding where they are from, where they are going, who they are here for, know what they want, identity is being who they were, and not trying to be someone else. This response solidifies that an individual must be given the liberty to claim their own identity and not have to accept an identity to which they do not identify with. The informants’ responses demonstrate how identifying identity can derive from different scenarios and occasions. Question 13 looks at variables that contributed to *campesin@s*’ identity asking, Q.13 “What elements do you believe contribute to the formation of your identity?” Interviewees responses’ varied, stating that experiences, people, specifically parents and grandparents, people, and people from their roots contribute to their identity. Two informants shared how their parents and grandparents shared their story, acknowledging poverty as part of their upbringing. What stood out was how *campesin@s* mentioned a story that was shared with them indicating how narrative holds value in different forms. Question 14 asks: Does being a *campesino* define who you are or is it part of your identity? This question examined whether *campesin@s* considered themselves a *campesin@* and if they did, what did that mean for them. Out of the 11 interviewees, four informants identified as a *campesin@* and the rest

did not identify as a *campesin@*. The informants' response to question 14 is found in Table 4. *Campesin@s* that did identify as a *campesin@* stated that being a *campesin@* was part of their persona, their roots derived from such work, it was what they learned, or a trait that was passed down. *Campesin@* Fuerte's response regarding her roots as a *campesin@* also shared that her paths were limited and thus, she stayed with what she knew. Fuerte's response exemplifies how few, if any opportunities are given to *campesin@s*. *Campesin@* Heriberto answered that being a *campesino* is what he learned and knew everything in regards to being a *campesino*. He said this with much humbleness and pride at the same time. Lastly, *Campesin@* Reservado mentioned how his parents had passed down their skills and the fields is what helped him survive. *Campesin@s* that did not identify as *campesin@* responded that it was not part of their identity because: it did not change who they were, anyone could work in the fields, or they hadn't work enough time to claim the title. While other *campesin@s* saw *campesin@* and identity as two different things. When *Campesina* Doña Jasmine responded that being a *campesin@* didn't change who she was and that she still remained the same person, I did not grasp the depth of her answer until further analysis. Doña Jasmine believed that being *campesina* did not change her perspective of how she viewed herself nor did she think she needed to be treated any more or any less. This concept of how a *campesin@* should be treated, whether claiming or rejecting a *campesin@* identity translated throughout *campesin@s*' responses. This phenomenon which was constructed to benefit corporations that *campesin@s* are meant to work this type of job as they were born or built for it, is disputed by how *campesin@s* view themselves. *Campesino* Ricardo

believes that anyone could work in the fields, one just had to work hard. *Campesin@s* remain working in the fields not because their body was shaped or constructed to withstand the hardships of the fields but because their minds have learned to become stronger than their flesh. Their incentive to work in the fields surpasses the aches and sacrifices that take place when working as a *campesin@*.

Campesin@s & Entities

I asked the following questions to the *campesin@s* in order to try to understand from their perspective how I.C.E., legalization, and entities affected their lives while taking into account their identity. Question 22 asked “In your own words what does it mean to be legal, how do you define it?” *campesin@s* answered to be legal means: “someone does straight, being good with society, having papers, to be illegal means being an alien- that doesn’t belong”. The informants’ responses can be found in **Table 5**. *Campesino* Javier’s response reminded of what Latin@s’ and immigrants’ minds have been preoccupied since the presidential campaign that is, *pelos de elote*, [corn hair] referring to President Donald Trump. Latina@s and immigrants have been the scapegoat of *pelos de elote* with his allegations of them beings criminals or his strategic plans of deporting them, regardless of their citizenship or residency status.¹³ *Campesino* Javier response “when no one is legal they don’t have to worry instead they have the freedom to

¹³ Referring to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program which President Trump wanted to overturn. Catherine E. Schoiechet, Susannah Cullinane, and Tal Kopan. *U.S. Immigration: DACA and Dreamers explained*. CNN Politics. October 11, 2017.

imagine”. Imagine a world where they are able to accomplish their dreams without the fear of being deported by *La Migra* or be categorized as a criminal because of your legal status. Javier shares he would be back in his town, seeing his parents. To have dreams does not necessarily mean that you have to come to the U.S. to obtain the “American Dream”.

Expanding on *Campesino* Javier’s response on imagery and legalization illustrates how interdependent they are. Having dreams does not mean to leave one’s home country, one’s native tongue, one’s culture- one’s family. In this case, it means one is able to reach their dreams and live their life in a country they consider home, as it is not necessary to abandon it. There is no reason to cross the border as one’s imagination has no borders, no longer forced to migrate for the audacious “American Dream” which enslaves one rather than transcending one. The “American Dream” prides itself as a dream that one can obtain if they work long and hard for it but the truth is that it becomes a nightmare. A nightmare that colonialists conceived during the mass genocides, establishing a system that allows for white supremacy to govern while placing people of color in a racial caste system. From the first genocide committed against Native American tribes to politicians assassinating countless immigrant lives that illegally cross the south border, the “American Dream” has been nothing but a dream. One’s dream translates to one’s perception of how they are seen to who they actually are. Drawing from *Migrant Imageries* which argues “the particular formation of Mexicans as a transborder laboring class forced migrants to articulate expansive definition of civic life and community that defied conventions of national citizenship in both Mexico and the United States”

(Camacho, 2008) reflects a similar theme that *campesin@s* undergo with their identity and sense of place. Furthermore, the work of migrant social movements has aimed to secure a precarious space of collective agency autonomous from either nation-state through narrating the histories of conquest, labor exploitation, and racial terror (Camacho, 2008). Through personal narrative and allocate spaces *campesin@s* have the freedom of cultural expression for the ethnic Mexican and American communities in which they share bonds of kinship, camaraderie, language, and cultural affinity.¹⁴

Question 23 asks the informants, “What does it mean to be legal in U.S. society?” Informants’ responses can be found in **Table 5**. There were two common themes among the informants’ answers, which were having papers and worrying less. *Campesina* Fuerte stated, “Aside from having many benefits you can have many opportunities. We think of our children & their opportunities. Even though they are born here you still worry because you aren’t. You leave them alone when you are at work”. Fuerte emphasized on the extensive worry that an individual has when not being “legal”. Simultaneously, Fuerte recognized the benefits and opportunities that one is denied when they are not “legal”. Meanwhile, *Campesino* Jorge highlighted on being illegal meant “a person that looks like they shouldn’t be in the U.S.” Jorge’s words convey that an “illegal” individual whose physically appearances does not fit the criteria of a “legal” American citizen. Hence, an individual that does not belong in the U.S. society because not only is their legal status

¹⁴ Inspired by the work of Alicia Schmidt Camacho. *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.- Mexico Borderlands (Nation of Nations)*. New York: New York University Press. 2008.

contempt but their exterior characteristics do not fit the racist, white supremacist ideology of what a “true American” is.

Question 28 “Do you see some relation or have any perception between *La Migra* and the United States?” examines both the position of *La Migra* [I.C.E.] and the reality that *campesin@s* daily face with *La Migra*. Informants’ responses can be found in **Table 5**. *Campesino* Herberito expressed both his understanding of *La Migra*’s obligations and the uncertainty it brings to his life “Well they are taking care of their country. You think of them (*La Migra*) a lot because you are not sure when they will take you away”. Living in apprehension not only brings a high level of stress but leads to physiological trauma. *Campesino* Lucino shared his thoughts, stating “Oh yes. Every time when you come from there to here that is what you’re thinking. The only fear that you have when come from over there to here is *La Migra*”. *La Migra* was established to regulate and control entries into the U.S. but it also was constructed to produce fear to certain groups of people. It is a fear tactic that the government built to distort the lives who not are “legal” and do not fit the racialized profile of a “true American”.

Narrative IV: I broke down by the first week of working in the fields as I played the song I.C.E.-Hielo by Santa Cecilia to my mother, I could no longer fight the tears. The lyrics mention how “I.C.E. is on the loose on the streets, never knowing when it might be our turn, now the children are crying as she leaves, crying as they see that their mom will not return, some stay here, others stay over there, that’s what happens when you leave for work”. Overwhelmed by what I was seeing and feeling when I worked with the *campesin@s* all I could do is turn to my mom for answers. I asked my mom “How can people treat *campesin@s* so horrible, degrading and humiliated them as though they are criminals? They are anything but that. They work so hard, all day. I don’t know if I can keep up with them, you’ve seen how I come back from the fields. They do this every day without complaining, just wanting to work in peace”. My mom held me and said “One day they will be compensated for what they do. If not here on earth then in heaven”. My mother’s words settled in, bringing both comfort and distress.

BELONGING NOT BECOMING: BRIDGES NOT BARRIERS

Comprehending *campesin@s* and their identity is pivotal to the environmental discourse. The reader must first realize that the argument lies between the food movement, the environmental movement, and society at large. These three groups are vitally intertwined. On the subject of society at large, the reader needs to comprehend this group is an umbrella that controls what is and is not normal. To understand society one needs to recognize the limitations society has on people to be “normal” in order to be accepted. If people do not fit into these limitations, then they are often pushed away from what is believed to be essential to function in society. Personal narratives are marginalized when society as a majority defines who is normal and accepted by its own made up standards. If someone does not fall into “normality” they are often dismissed, in academia they are often not written about due to such dismissal. What’s more when looking at the environmental movement we see a similar pattern, again because *campesin@s* do not fit into societal and academia standards. Although, I acknowledge that environmentalists and scholars are noting *campesin@s* in their work, it is still a very low percentage among the overall environmental movement and environmental discourse. To fully realize what is at stake, the reader has to internalize how important *campesin@s* are to U.S.’ survival, and how important their story is to their identity and existence. Lastly, the food movement shares an oppressive resistance in grasping the *campesin@* identity and their existence when food is only recognized as important. The movement centers its work in the fields where produce is grown and the end result which

is food at one's table, yet neglects to list the middle passage. In fact, the idea of not noting *campesin@s* in the food movement is elitist and further reflects how society views *campesin@s*.

Consequently, it then becomes inevitable for *campesin@s* to be “aliens” in our country not for the reason that they come from different lands, but because our society does not perceive them as individuals. Society views *campesin@s* as a threat and a burden. They are neither. Years of oppression and exploitation both in *campesin@s*' native land and in the recent established U.S., in which *campesin@s* are not only considered foreigners in land that once belonged to their ancestors, but far worse- they are seen and treated as criminals. It is crucial to comprehend the essence of who these human beings are and grasp the meaning of what they are saying. There is a scripture in the Holy Bible that speaks of language and meaning, I bring this specific scripture into this chapter because it brought clarity to the two main components of my thesis, identity and personal narrative. The scripture is first Corinthians “If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me” (*New International Version*, 1 Corinthians 14:11). We are foreigners to one another, as we remain lost in translation.¹⁵ By not comprehending what we are saying to one another, we leave others to misinterpret who people are. People that work and look after agricultural lands. Yet, without proper interpretation and understanding of who

¹⁵ My thoughts here are shaped by scriptures from the Holy Bible. New International Version. 1 Corinthians 14: 11

campesin@s are we will continue to write them off from our society and as a human beings. However, if we integrate them to the environmental language and dialogue that they too belong, we will dismantle the hegemonic structure that continues to exist.

The mainstream media and the government have fed us framed imagery and feigned stories that have disconnected us with the *campesin@* community. In order to dismantle the fabricated “truth” of who *campesin@s* are, influencing our perception and interaction with them, reframing must take place. Reframing is about taking control over mainstream concepts of “truth” in regards to my *raza*, comrades, narratives, and identities in which I find myself intertwined, as I am part of all of these elements.¹⁶ Reframing takes places when *campesin@s* refuse to identify to anything that *they* do not identify themselves with, when they reject an identity that restricts them to only their occupation because they may or not choose to identify with that line of work.

If you are absent from someone’s life how can you connect to them?¹⁷ Through *campesin@* narratives we can better comprehend who *campesin@s* are in our communities and beyond our physical and abstract borders. I began my thesis knowing that I will never completely understand what it means to be a *campesin@*, as I couldn’t become one. Yet, what I came out with was that it was never about becoming, but about belonging. I am privileged to say that after my research I felt as though as I did belong to

¹⁶ Inspired by Chisa Oros’ thesis. *The Role of Humboldt during the California Gold Rush: A Focus on Local Indigenous Women’s Struggle, Resistance, and Resilience*. Humboldt State University: Environment & Community M.A. program. May 2016.

¹⁷ Inspired by a message given at Mercy Church, Santa Maria, CA. October 15, 2017.

the *cuadrilla* that I worked in. I knew who my *cuadrilla* was and they knew who I was. I keep in contact with several of my comrades as we share how we are doing and wish each other well thoughts. I was able to form a community within the *campesin@s* community, one that gave me more knowledge and purpose to my life. I found myself as a bridge between the social sciences and the *campesin@s* community as I whole heartedly devoted my sweat, time, and who I was with both sides. With my fellow comrades, I served next to them-- not beneath or above them--in the long 10 hours of work I humbled myself and learned what *campesin@s* wanted to share with me.

Cultura Cura, Culture Cures

Throughout this research, I have come across numerous contradictions about identity and who is entitled to claim their identity. I have found that *campesin@s* are in a paradox where they can claim an identity but in this nation of great contradiction- of land and liberty, but only to a few and selected, it means nothing when you your legal status is “illegal” and the color of your skin is brown. The *Los Tigres de Norte*, a Mexican band that formed in San Jose, California during the 1960s singing *corridos* (Mexican ballads) while having a political stance on illegal immigration, reinforce this rhetoric of contradictions as their lyrics continue to resonate with many *campesin@s*, and people across the Americas. Their lyrics connect with their fans not only because of their unique talent and blend of music but how they identify to the musicians’ words. The band sings about the harsh realities and injustices that immigrants from south of the border face as they constantly have to fight who they are and where they belong.

A thousand times they've yelled at me to return back to my country because I don't belong here. I want to remind the *gringo* [yankee] that I didn't cross the border, the border crossed me. America was born free, men were the ones that divided it. They are the ones that painted the line so that I could jump it. And they call me the invader. It's a great error, very well documented, that we were taken away eight states. Who is the invader here? I am stranger in my own land and I don't come to start a war. I am a working man. And if history doesn't lie, here the great nation sits among brave warriors of two nations, indigenous mixed with Spanish. And if we are basing ourselves by centuries then we are more Americans, we are more American than an Anglo-Saxon' child.

Los Tigres del Norte, Somos mas Americanos

Los Tigres del Norte lyrics encapsulate the very essence of the *campesin@s*' struggle.

From the countless times they are told to go back to their country to the constant battle that they are not "true" Americans, *campesin@s* are left in no man's land. Forced to leave their own country due to both corrupted nations, Mexico and the U.S. that exploit them, they are left to migrate to the very country that initially led them to exile.

In the following lyrics, *Los Tigres del Norte* embody the state that *campesin@s* find themselves having migrated and working in the U.S.

From work to my house, I don't know what is going on with me. Despite me being the man of the house, I hardly go out, because I am afraid that they might approach me and deport me. What value does this money have if I am like

prisoner in this great nation. When I think about it I begin crying, even though this jail cell might be of gold, it doesn't stop from being a prison.

Los Tigres del Norte, La Jaula de Oro

Los Tigres del Norte have been able to connect with numerous group of people as they sing of the oppression and inequalities that many relate with. The musicians sing in all Americas uniting both their similarities and differences, as they come together despite looking different and deriving from diverse backgrounds. *Los Tigres del Norte* is part of the *campesin@* culture as their lyrics are a form of culture healing as it brings comfort and hope. As I wrapped up my research analysis and would drive pass the agricultural fields it was inevitable not to feel discouraged when knowing the state that *campesin@s* are in. Playing *Los Tigres del Norte* would remind me of the purpose of my thesis and to not lose hope in *la causa*. Their lyrics served as an indicator that this was bigger than me, and that *la causa* would continue to evolve and transform through time. The lyrics of *Somos Mas Americanos* embodies my research analysis through culture and as a form narrative "I am stranger in my own land and I don't come to start a war. I am a working man. And if history doesn't lie, here the great nation sits among brave warriors of two nations, indigenous mixed with Spanish". Transitioning to another form of narrative and healing are found in the words of Francisco Jimenez, who writes about *campesin@s* and his experience, noting "My story is not a unique story. It is a story of the present and the past. It might even be your story" (2017). Jimenez's work has served as a form of

antidote as *campesin@s* are given the recognition that many scholars, movements, and discourses neglect.

In the process of the three strategies of participatory research I found *campesin@s* to be in between strategies one and two: 1) the reappropriation of knowledge and 2) development of knowledge. Providing the appropriate resources and allocated spaces, *campesin@s* can transcend from reappropriating knowledge to knowledge developing whether that is through: oral testimonies, art expression, community development, building coalitions, documented narratives or leaving the canvas blank for the *campesin@* to decide for him/herself. A proposed framework that could help transition them from reappropriation to development is found in the work of The National Compadres Network. The Network bases its work on the philosophy of *La Cultura Cura* (Transformational Healing) which propose that:

La Cultura Cura is a transformative health and healing philosophy that recognizes that within an individual's, families and community's authentic cultural values, traditions and indigenous practices exist the pathway to healthy development, restoration and life-long well-being. This culturally based framework focuses on building on the natural opportunity factors and on what is healthy within an individual, family, community or culture. This indigenous based life view promotes what is right based on culturally grounded physical, emotional, mental and spiritual principles and practices. (2017)

The Compadres Network recognized how their communities transformed when engaging with their roots. Their philosophy and process of transformational health and healing is exemplified in the following elements, as in the parts of a tree that root an individual, family and/or community. This interconnected movement is vital to consider for integrated health, healing, growth, leadership development and individual, family and community P.R.I.D.E.- Purpose, Responsibility, Interdependence, Development, and Enthusiasm (The National Compadres Network, 2017). Of the five aspects that P.R.I.D.E. consists of I will focus only two, Responsibility and Interdependence.

Under Responsibility, which is based on respect, it is necessary for the individual to be guided enabling them to dream, reflect, and rediscover the life-enhancing values and gifts of his/her own indigenous culture. The National Compadres Network note that this process it is vital for them to know and understand their history in order to understand the process that created their present situation. By this process, and with the proper guidance, a boy, man, girl, woman will be able to disconnect the pain and imbalance that they and their people are experiencing from the essence and strength of the positives aspects of their culture. As part of their indigenous heritage, all people have traditions and customs for clarifying and rediscovering this vision of growth (2017). Meanwhile interdependence is based on individual, family, and/or community, trust being at the core, *acknowledging the* strengthen of a community, and the families within it, directly, enhances the development and healing of its individuals. The National Compadres Network illustrate how individuals heal and grow, they re-integrate with the positive vision of the community. Families/communities, and the

individuals within them, must develop interdependently. If one is missing, then disharmonious growth occurs, which leads to false hope and development. Through the redeveloped interconnectedness, (Transformatonal Healing and Development: *Circulos*) cycles of generational destruction and pain are interrupted and a commitment to generational healing and development is initiated, individual by individual, family by family, community by community (The National Compadres Network 2017).

This proposed framework can allow for *campesin@s* to engage in spaces that have a more bottom-up approach as they centralized on indigenous roots, cultural background, and knowing one's history to better understand their current state. With the *campesin@* community engaging to such framework or a similar or a new paradigm, *campesin@s* can claim spaces where *they* can disengage from accounts, narratives, identities that are not theirs- instead be part of a larger community that exist from within. Many *campesin@s* are already there, some are in a transformational period, while others have not been given such opportunity; whatever state they are in they are interconnected and together they can bring the change *they* want to see and need to see. This change can take form and size in the agricultural lands, their environment, their backyards but above all it needs to come from within, individually decided or coherently.

CONCLUSION

Dominated communities engaged in environmental struggles do not disaggregate their various identities and needs. Although they may engage in strategic essentialism, the practice of reifying aspects of one's identity for political purpose, they recognize their multiple-identities and the various lines of domination and power that need to be resisted and challenged.

(Paulido, 1996, xv)

After completing my thesis I have to the conclusion that this study has been bigger than me or a Master of Arts in Social Sciences degree. This thought initially stimulated while attending graduate classes and recognizing how my people's struggle does not take a break, it continued as I sat during lectures. Laura Paulido articulates how dominated communities simultaneously comprehend their multiple-identities and the need to resist and challenge as they combat domination and power. When narrowing down my research topic I felt overwhelmed whether I would do justice to the work that I was to collect and present. I come to realize that I cannot capsule everything I observed, gathered, or analyzed because words cannot do justice to what I saw and felt; it must be lived in order to grasp a sample of what is going on in the fields.

I learned the language of the Mainstream Environmental Movement, rarely questioning the knowledge that was disseminated but, ultimately accepting as truth. It was not until I began to critically think of the information that was considered as knowledge-

consequently then seen as truth, that I began to deconstruct and realize that the Mainstream Environmental Movement was exclusive and with limitations. The Movement created a perpetual narrative, that reflects a colonized mentality and mirrors a language, discourse, and motives of colonial strategies- divide and conquer. The Movement negates to create spaces for people to have a dialogue of environmental issues that directly impact the individual. In this case *campesin@s*' livelihoods which depend on these so called green spaces but most importantly what is at stake are *campesin@s*' breathing, human lives. What is critical here is for any environmental discourse that may take place is to acknowledge the history, intersectionalities, and knowledge that *campesin@s* carry within.

The purpose of doing research at the UFW Foundation and Union was not to romanticize the UFW. There is much respect that the UFW has earned due to its long-withstanding trials of speculation and harassment. However, they are not the solution to what is at stake here. The UFW has definitely served as a means to amplify the *campesin@s*' voices since the 1960s, their work is invaluable. But we cannot solely rely on the UFW to defeat the many struggles that *campesin@s* face and expect them to provide spaces for *campesin@s* to call theirs. I came in challenging environmental discourse and while I still am, what is at stake are the spaces and the appropriate resources that *campesin@s* need or ask for.

hooks reinforce how it is vital to refer to white supremacy when tackling critical issues emphasizing how there needs to be some language that would actually remind us continually of the interlocking dominations that define our reality (2006). We can draw from hook's proposed language when creating a language that must exist among

campesin@s and non *campesin@s*. It is vital to learn a different language in order to be able to communicate with one another. We must expand our vocabulary and concepts to be able to understand each other differences and similarities. Furthermore, we must listen when communicating as we learn to empathize with one another- we learn to understand one's experiences and realities. Along with listening we must engage in suffering together as it exemplifies the deepest form of love. *La causa* takes different shape and size. It is through our suffering together that there is change, character formation, and relationships form. *La causa* is not death with our ancestral fire we fight against the mass oppressions and systemic injustices. Through understanding our own identity we can liberate ourselves and one another. Laura Paulido (1996) illustrates both the complexity and commonalities that identity carries as she states:

People, regardless of how oppressed they might be, do not inevitably have a common identity. A share identity must be cultivated and refined through interaction and struggle with other groups. The development of a collective identity allows people to forge an emotional attachment to each other, but it is more than that. (46)

Paulido illustrates the importance of collective and individual identity as it perpetuates the indispensable value of identity. Yet it is through comprehending one's identity that we can collaborate and unite. *La causa* is alive more than ever alive. When we are united we can bring forward change and transformation. *Que Viva La Causa! Que Viva! Long Live La Causa! Long Live!*

Narrative V: “She is going to write a book about us. One that tell us of what goes on in the fields. The struggles we go through. Come on, help her out. This will help us out. Right *muchacha*?” *Campesino* Lucino asks me, as he finishes his conversation with his brother in law, who is hesitant in being interviewed. I clarify with Lucino that I am not writing a book, at least not yet. I inform him again that this a piece of writing that aims to capture their narratives with them being the authors, who speak volumes of what is going in the fields and who they are. I reassure Lucino that with this writing product I will bring awareness and share with people that are not familiar with the realities and injustices that *campesin@s* continue to bear. I express to Lucino that I want him and any other *campesin@s* that are willing to be part of the environmental discussion to share what is going on in the lands they work. He response with a smile and says “That would be something *muchacha*”.

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APPENDICES

No.

The Other side of the Spectrum: Semi-structured Interview*UFW Foundation and Organization Employees*

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

Background Information

What is your race? What is your nationality?

How old are you?

What is your sex?

What is your educational background?

How did you first hear about United Farm Workers (UFW)? How old were you?

How long have you been working for UFW?

Is your family involved or do they support UFW?

UFW Services

1.) What has been the most given services that people have been asking from the UFW Foundation?

2.) How does UFW serve its community?

3.) How is the UFW perceived and treated among the community?

Value & Land

4.) To what extent do you put value on your family? (How important is family to you)

5.)How important is it to work in the fields to be able to support a campesinos' family?

6.)Do you see value in the land that campesinos work in?

7.)How do you feel survival makes you value the world we live in?

8.)How do you feel the United States puts value on land in comparison to how you put value on land?

9.)In your own words, how do you define conservation?

10.)Do *campesinos*' hold a stake in or play a role in preserving the earth's resources we live in? Please explain your answer.

11.)Who benefits from the work campesinos do?

Identity Formation

12.)Have you ever worked in the fields? If so, for how many years?

13.) Has any of your family members worked in the fields? If so, has this type of work skills being passed down in your family?

14.) If you have children, is this a job that you would want to pass down to your children or share your experiences with your children?

15.) What other type of jobs have you had?

16.) What does identity mean to you? How do you define it?

17.) What elements do you believe contribute to the formation of one's identity?

18.) How would you describe your identity, such as what factors or experiences in life have shaped the person you are?

19.) What is your native language?

20.) Do you speak another language? Which language do you feel more comfortable or prefer speaking in?

21.) If you speak English, what are the reasons you speak it?

22.) Is language a factor that contributes to your identity? Please explain.

23.) How does it impact you, whether empowering you or limiting you in this country? Please elaborate.

24.) Have you ever felt that you had limited access to resources and/or opportunities in the U.S.? Please explain your answer.

Campesinos & the Community

25.) Are campesinos' part of your community? Please explain your answer.

26.) What role do they play in our society?

27.) What kind of responsibility should campesinos have towards this country, if any?

28.) How do you think society views them? How accurate is that perception?

29.) What kind of effects does that preconceived view have on them, if any?

Legalization and Identity

30.) In your own words, what does it mean to be legal, how do you define it?

31.) What does it mean to be legal in this U.S. society?

32.) Was such word as prevalent in your original country? (For individuals that were born or raised in a different country)

33.) How does not being able to speak the English language or not having “true” citizenship affect one in the U.S.?

La Migra- ICE

34.) What does La Migra represent to you?

35.) What kind of effects does La Migra, have on the community?

36.) How do you feel the fear of deportation affects campesinos?

37.) What is the relation or perception that campesinos have between La Migra and the United States?

38.)What is your opinion on La Migra, whether they serve their purpose on this society or fails to do so?

Social Movements

39.) Are you familiar with the Chicano Movement? If yes, ask the following questions. If no, continue on to Q41.

40a.)What are some significant things that the Chicano Movement did to help the Chicano/Mexican community?

40b.)Has the Chicano Movement contribute in the formation of your identity?

41.) How has UFW help the *campesino* community?

42a.)Is the UFW still advocating and serving the community as strongly as they did in the 1960s when it was established?

42b.)Do you think *campesino* community is as motivated and involved with the UFW as they were in the 60s? Please explain your answer.

42c.) Do you believe the UFW has contributed to the formation of your identity?

42d.) In your opinion, how do you think campesinos identify with the UFW?

43.) Are you familiar with the Environment Movement? If yes, ask the following questions. If no, explain what the movement is.

44a.) How do you think the Environmental Movement portray and represent the *campesino* community?

44b.) Where do you stand with this whole movement?

44c.) How do you think the *campesino* community can contribute to the Environment Movement discourse?

Any additional comments or anything you wanted to share.

Semi-Estructurado Entrevista de Campesino/a**Fecha:****Empezar Tiempo:****Terminar Tiempo:****Información del Entrevistado**

Cual grupo de edad pertenece a:

A.) 18-25 B.) 25-30 C.) 30-35 D.) 40-45 E.) 50 and up

Cual es su sexo?

Cual es su nacionalidad y de que estado es?

Que tipo de educación tiene, sea de la institución o de otro tipo?

Valor y Tierra

Q1.) En sus propias palabras que significa el valor para usted?

Q2.) Tiene algún tipo de valor hacia la tierra que trabaja?

Q3.) El aspecto de poder sobrevivir afecta el valor que tiene hacia el mundo que vivimos en? Porfavor explique.

Q4.) Como cree que los Estados Unidos pone valor a la tierra a comparando del valor que su original país pone a la tierra?

Q5.) Desde el punto de vista de un *campesino*, que cree que ayudaría conservar el planeta que vivió en?

Q6.) Quien beneficia del trabajo que usted hace?

Formación de Identidad

Q7.) Por cuanto ha trabajado en los fieles?

Q8.) Quien le enseñó a trabajar en los fieles?

Q9.) Esta obra de trabajo ha sido pasado adentro de su familia?

Q10.) Si tiene hijo/as, quisiera pasar este trabajo a sus hijo/as o compartir sus experiencias con sus ellos/as?

Q11.) Ha tenido otro tipo de trabajo?

Q12.) Que es la identidad para usted? Como le define?

Q13.) Que elementos cree usted que contribuí a la formación de su identidad, sea experiencias o personas?

Q14.) Ser un *campesino* define quien usted es, o es parte de su identidad? Porfavor explique.

Q15.) Como cree que la sociedad le ve? Que tal exacto es esa percepción de usted?

Q16.) Que tipo de efectos tiene esa percepción de usted, si alguna?

Q17.) Cual es su nativo idioma?

Q18.) Habla otra idioma? Cual idioma se siente mas cómoda o prefiere hablar en?

Q19.) Habla ingles? Porque razones le habla (o no le habla)?

Q20.) Cree que el idioma es un aspecto en cual contribuye a su identidad? Por favor explique.

Q21.) Como cree que el idioma le impacta, sea que le empodérese o le traga restricciones en este país? Por favor elabore.

Legalización y Identidad

Q22.) En sus propias palabras, que significa ser legal, como le define?

Q23.) Que significa ser legal en la sociedad de los Estados Unidos?

Q24.) Alguna vez se ha sentido que tenido acceso limitado para recursos y/o para oportunidades en los Estados Unidos? Por favor explique.

La Migra- ICE

Q25.) Que es su opinión de La Migra?

Q26.) Que tipo de efectos tiene La Migra en la comunidad?

Q27.) Como cree que el temor de deportación afecta a campesinos?

Q28.) Ve alguna relación o percepción entre La Migra y los Estados Unidos?

Movimientos Sociales

Q29.) Conoce sus derechos como *campesino/a*?

Q30.) Quien le informo sobre sus derechos?

Q31.) Como *campesino/a* cree que su voz es escuchada en esta sociedad? Por favor explique.

Q32.) Conoce del Movimiento Chicano? Si su respuesta es sí, pregunta las segundas preguntas. Si su respuesta es no, continua a Q24.

Q33a.) Cual son cosas significadas que el Movimiento Chicano hecho para ayudar el Chicano/Mexicano comunidad?

Q33b.) Ha contribuido el Movimiento Chicano a la formación de tu identidad? En que manera?

Q34.) Conoce de la Unión de los Campesinos? Si su respuesta es sí, pregunta las segundas preguntas. Si su respuesta es no, continua a Q26.

Q35a.) En qué manera ayudado la Unión a la comunidad?

Q35b.) Usted cree que la comunidad de campesinos esta igual de motivada y involucrada con la Unión como en los 60s? Por favor de explicar su respuesta.

Q35c.) En qué manera contribuido la Unión en la formación de su identidad?

Q36.) Conoce del Movimiento Medioambiental? Si su respuesta es sí, pregunta las segundas preguntas. Si su respuesta es no, explique que el Movimiento es.

Q37a.) Como cree que el Movimiento Medioambiental representan la comunidad de los campesinos?

Q37b.) Como cree que la comunidad de *campesino* pueda contribuir al discurso del Medioambiental Movimiento?

Q38.) Me podria dibujar y escribir unas palabras sobre su experiencia cuando migro de su país original hacia los Estados Unidos?