Threat Narratives and Othering:

Considering How Narratives about Immigrant Agricultural Workers Contribute to Their Exploitation in the United States

by

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Abstract

The social problem of agricultural labor exploitation in the United States (U.S.) has existed since before the formal inception of this country. Today, immigration and labor policy prevent agricultural workers from accessing basic labor rights and protections and undocumented workers are ineligible for entitlement programs that would improve their quality of life. September 11th terrorist attacks redirected public discourse about U.S. immigration policy and immigrants, including agricultural laborers, leading to a narrative that undocumented workers are threats to national security. This Capstone research explores how narratives shape the reproduction of agricultural labor exploitation by creating the impression that immigrant laborers are threats to the security of U.S. citizens. This research also examines how threats to immigrant workers' livelihoods and well-being have been documented by academic research. Methodologically, this research uses qualitative content analysis to address how immigrant workers are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity; it uses literature review to document the threats faced by immigrant agricultural workers in the same categories. Findings suggest that thought leaders position immigrants as threats to personal safety, national security, and economic well-being, often ignoring contributions to state and local economies. Academic literature clearly documents agricultural workers' vulnerability to each of the same threats. This research suggests that narratives in political speech that position undocumented immigrants as threats are misguided. Undocumented immigrants, including agricultural workers, are more vulnerable to the same threats than the general public.

Keywords: agricultural labor, exploitation, farmworkers, immigration, othering, threat narrative

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Lastly, for my sister, Mary, surprise!

Contents

Abbreviations

BVI	Blaming the victim ideology
CHCI	Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NALEO	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
SNAP	Supplement Nutrition Access Program
U.S.	United States

One—Introduction

I aimed for the public's heart, and by accident I hit them in the stomach – Upton Sinclair

This was Mr. Sinclair's reaction to the public outrage following the publication of his book *The Jungle* about the appalling working conditions of the Chicago stockyards during the early twentieth century. This quote also perfectly summarizes how his work was a spectacular misfire in developing a public narrative focused on working conditions. The public's reaction to *The Jungle* resulted in important food systems legislation including the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 and the Meat Inspection Act. These two pieces of legislation contributed to a safer food system for consumers, but largely left the immigrant laborers, for whom Mr. Sinclair was advocating, overlooked and ignored. This result is representative of the power of narrative in shaping outcomes and addressing social problems.

Narratives are part of our daily lives. They are the stories we tell ourselves and each other about the ways of the world. How these stories are told will, in turn, influence how we respond to them. Untold or underrepresented narratives, like those about the labor conditions Sinclair documented, do not inspire any response at all.

Many of us probably do not consider the labor involved in the food system. There is a great deal of popular media such as books, news articles, and podcasts about the value of "knowing your farmer" and supporting local food systems. But beyond that, for most of us, the food system just works – the production, delivery, purchase and consumption of food is part of modern society's infrastructure. But, how many of us think about the labor, the people, behind the production? Sinclair wrote about immigrant labor exploitation in 1906 and the social problem of immigrant labor exploitation continues to persist well over a century later. Many of the

popular common narratives around food systems today omit the exploitation and vulnerabilities of the immigrant agricultural worker. There are many organizations, advocates, and scholars doing remarkable work on behalf of this often-invisible labor force. However, as mentioned above, it has been my experience that when the general public does prioritize food systems issues, it often focuses on the end-user's experience, the consumer, and emphasizes issues like product quality, safety, affordability, and accessibility. Gray (2014) touches on this issue, noting that consumers are concerned with what they put into their bodies, but they "don't eat the workers" (Gray 2014, 129), so labor issues are simply not part of the calculus. Yet, improvements related to food safety, quality, affordability or accessibility would not be possible without agricultural labor.

It is this type of ignorance, whether willful, or blissfully unintended, that contributes to the ongoing social problem of agricultural labor exploitation which is related to social justice. Social justice, as a concept, is explained in more detail in Chapter Two, but for the purposes of simplicity, social justice is equitable access to fundamental resources and respect for human dignity. When a narrative omits or glosses over exploitation, or diminishes the value or ignores the existence of a population of people, it becomes an issue of social justice.

My interest in this social problem has a rather circuitous origin story. Like many others, my interest in food systems and food studies was based on health and sustainability concerns. However, those concerns were for my own health and well-being and the health and well-being of the planet. My self-awareness was limited. I reveled in learning about new-to-me ingredients, techniques, and preparations; food was a joyful and engaging experience. As a person with a certain amount of privilege, I found myself seeking out "ethical" choices when I shopped at the grocery store or the farmers' market. I was a conscious consumer! I knew my farmer and

composted! I was righteous! However, I began to cultivate a certain awareness about how the stories were told, about the producers, about the farms, about the artisanal products. We only ever see the top end, the chef or the beautifully packaged product, or the pastoral landscapes, we don't see the people behind the curtain who are doing much of the work.

The Food Systems and Society program has provided me an opportunity to learn about social injustices in our society using the food system as a lens. Unlike other social systems, we all need to eat, we all actively participate in the food system every day. One of the many takeaways from this program is that none of the problems we are addressing are new. The people who are most affected by the issues may change and shift over time, but the problems are the same. My education about food systems, both formal and informal, has helped me determine the research problem that will be addressed in this research, which is to better understand how othering and fear contribute to the exploitation of immigrant farmworkers in the United States by operating through narratives about the threats posed by the oppressed, even as they may experience similar threats themselves.

Few experiences are burned into my memory like the events of September 11, 2001. I can still recall the clear deep blue sky and the clouds of black smoke billowing up beyond the highway as I walked to work. I thought it was from a truck fire, but it was actually from American Airlines flight 77 which had crashed into the Pentagon. I remember the chaos, the confusion, the rhythmic chuff-chuff-chuff of helicopters and the roar of fighter jets scrambling overhead. I also remember experiencing feelings of grief, vulnerability, and fear in a way I never had before. The narratives that emerged in the weeks and months after the terrorist attacks were my first real world experience of an "us" versus "them" mentality.

Narratives based on fear are a powerful tool. Narratives can strip away the humanity of the "bad guys" as much as the good. They can help us justify making decisions that will have horrific consequences. Narratives can inspire action or fear and inaction. Fear can also keep us isolated in a situational purgatory, unable or unwilling to make decisions that can change our circumstances. This Capstone looks at narratives that position immigrants as threats, which may reproduce their exploitation. Specifically, I examine narratives from political speeches delivered by high-profile thought leaders, sitting presidents and presidential candidates, which may position immigrants as threats. I also examine academic literature that documents threats to immigrants in order to understand threats they may face, even as they are positioned as threats themselves. Thus, this research addresses the ongoing labor exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers by asking about how they are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity so that I can better understand and challenge narratives that reproduce their exploitation.

This Capstone includes four additional chapters. Chapter Two provides background and context by defining concepts foundational to this research including food systems, society, social justice, and social problems. Chapter Two also elaborates the social problem of immigrant agricultural labor exploitation and articulates the research problem and overall research question addressed in this research to respond to this social problem. Chapter Three explains the research paradigms commonly used in social science research, the constitutive research questions used in this research, and the methodologies used to address them. Chapter Four presents the research findings based on the constitutive questions and explains the contributions made in this Capstone. Chapter Five provides a summary of this Capstone work and a reflection on social justice and social problems.

The following chapter introduces and explains concepts foundational to the social problem and research problem addressed in this research.

Two—Background and Significance

This chapter introduces and explains concepts that are foundational to the social problem and research problem addressed in this research. The first section of this chapter provides definitions of the food system and society. The second section explains social problems and social justice as they relate to food systems and society, as well as elaborating the social problem of labor exploitation, which is the focus of this research. The final section introduces the research problem and overall research question as it relates to the ongoing exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers through the conceptual frameworks of othering and threat narratives.

The next section provides definitions and context for this Capstone research by articulating its domain in food systems and society.

Domain of Food Systems and Society

To understand the social problem that this research will address, it is important to establish the relationship between the food system and society. The term "society" can mean different things to different people, which may be a contributing factor in ongoing social discord. When we think about societies, we generally imagine groups of people who have a common way of life, shared values, and feelings that unite them (Bennett 2005). While we may generally assume that a shared society reflects a shared value system and common way of life, this does not mean that there is social fairness or equity, especially across socioeconomic boundaries.

In the United States, the dominant U.S. culture is one of individualism and self-reliance (L. Mitchell 2014). We also perpetuate the meritocracy myth: that if we just work hard enough, we will achieve success. The marginalized and the poor are more often blamed for their station in life, a concept Alessio (2011) describes as "blaming the victim ideology" (BVI) (Alessio 2011, 4). He describes BVI, in its most innocuous form, as beginning with identifying and

stigmatizing "people who are different from mainstream and normative standards" (4). Those who subscribe to BVI will look at the stigmatized individuals and ask "how can we fix these individuals so they can be like everyone else?" (4). When members of the mainstream or normative society ask that question, they are implying that the "difference is intrinsically undesireable or problematic" and/or "that the difference is a result of something that is wrong with the individual" (4). Society encourages individualism but still sets an expectation of cultural and social norms.

Alessio's description of BVI has two important elements. First, in distinguishing between mainstream and normative people, BVI creates an "other," a concept that is further explained later in this chapter. Second, the concept BVI also indicates how those who are different are marked as somehow wrong. He explains how society diminishes the experiences of the few: "when few people have the same experience, it is a function of something wrong with the individual or the individual's immediate circumstance" (2011, 3). Assumptions that assign blame to individuals absolve social and systemic structures in society (e.g. elected leadership) of any culpability, meaning that those who are poor and marginalized are left without the systemic assistance to relieve them of their poverty and related struggles.

An example of this is the federal government's recent cut-off of two social safety net programs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: enhanced unemployment benefits and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. These programs helped millions of Americans survive the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting devastating financial downturn (Ruiz-Goiriena 2021). Twenty-five Republican-led states opted to end enhanced benefits during the summer of 2021. Their rationale was that constituents preferred to receive unemployment benefits rather than take available jobs and so should not be

supported. By the federal cut-off date in September, of the 11 million people who were receiving $600/week in enhanced unemployment benefits, 8.9 million would no longer receive any type of unemployment insurance and the remaining 2.1 million would have their benefits reduced by $300/week (Ruiz-Goiriena 2021).

This is a clear example of BVI, as there was no consideration for families that were without affordable childcare, or for the health, safety, or well-being of those who were responsible for the elderly, the medically fragile, or other vulnerable populations. Systemic financial support is especially important to low-wage workers who do not have the same resources as higher-wage workers.

Blaming the victim ideology is also reflected in the food system, which also has social problems. For the purposes of this research, I am using the food system as a lens to examine social problems as they relate to labor. Much like the term society, the food system can mean different things to different people. For the purposes of this research, I am using Neff's (2014) definition of the food system, which is a "system encompassing all the activities and resources that go into producing, distributing, and consuming food; the drivers and outcomes of those processes; and the extensive and complex relationships between system participants and components" (2). Under our capitalist model, food is not only representative of society, but is also a "social relation that embodies the labor, value, ownership, expertise and power relations of a capitalist system" (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 79). For much of mainstream, normative society, the food system is practically invisible; it just works. But, as with other facets of a capitalist system, it is the stigmatized and marginalized among us who suffer – such as, for example, exploited labor within the food system or those struggling with food access and food insecurity.

It is the food system's relationship to labor in which I am most interested. The labor that is foundational to the functionality of our food system is often overlooked and ignored. Those who provide the labor are often the "other," the different and the marginalized that Alessio described in "blaming the victim ideology." Their status as social outcast, or "other," leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment. Thus, this Capstone research will focus on the social problem of labor exploitation.

The next section will review the concepts of social problems and social justice in food systems and society and elaborate the social problem of labor exploitation among immigrant agricultural workers.

Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society

This section explains the conceptual frameworks of social problems and social justice in food systems and society, which are foundational to this Capstone research.

Alessio (2011) defines a social problem as one that involves harm to one or more individuals or social entities, has at least one social cause and/or one social effect and requires one or more social remedies. Some social problems are the result of social injustices. For example, social problems may stem from inequitable access to and distribution of resources. Those resources are not necessarily commodity goods, but include things like access to adequate and safe housing, transportation, food security, education, living wage jobs, and healthcare. When social problems inequitably affect particular groups of people, they are social problems related to social justice. For the purpose of this research, social justice is defined as "an equitable distribution of fundamental resources and respect for human dignity, such that no minority group's life interest and struggles are undermined and that forms of political interaction enable

all groups to voice their concerns for change. Thus, justice involves meeting basic needs, freedom from exploitation and oppression, and access to opportunity and participation" (Allen 2008, 157). Young (1990) describes social justice by addressing the systemic issues that impede the development of individual capacities. Specifically, she addresses two constraints on social justice, oppression and domination, which are relevant concepts given this research's focus on labor exploitation in the food system.

Young explains that the concept of oppression has evolved from its traditional definition of experiencing tyranny by a ruling group. Instead, oppression has become less overt and more structural, meaning that social structures contribute to the "immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people" (Young 1990, 56). What makes oppression embedded in social structures more insidious is that we have become lulled into believing that this is how society functions and thus reproduce structural oppression without questioning how we can, or should, change the status quo.

Young's "Five Faces of Oppression" describes how oppression is experienced in different ways, including through exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. I define each here to provide further context on how these concepts are representative of social (in)justice when considering the social problem of labor exploitation in the United States that this research addresses. Young's definition of exploitation is based on a capitalist model, wherein the demands of the few are provided for at the cost of the many. Exploitation is a structural relation between social groups that includes social rules about what work is, who does what for whom, and how the results of work are appropriated by inequitable power relations (60).

Marginalization is a form of oppression experienced by those whose agency is diminished. Even when support is provided to the marginalized, the provision of welfare to compensate for injustices produces new injustices by depriving those dependent on it of rights and freedoms that others have. Thus, even when material deprivation is somehow mitigated by societal support, marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capabilities in socially defined and recognized ways (63).

Powerlessness, as a form of oppression, speaks to one's socioeconomic, educational, and occupational status. The powerless have little or no work autonomy, exercise little creativity or judgement in their work, have no technical expertise or authority, express themselves awkwardly, especially in public or bureaucratic settings and do not command respect (65).

To experience cultural imperialism as a form of oppression means to experience how the dominant meaning of a society renders the particular perspective of ones' group invisible at the same time as it stereotypes ones' group and positions it as "other" (66). Cultural imperialism is much like BVI, which identifies and stigmatizes those who are different from mainstream normative standards. The "othering" of cultural imperialism and BVI creates specific experiences not shared by the dominant group because culturally oppressed groups are also socially segregated and occupy specific, subordinate positions in the social division of labor (67).

Lastly, Young addresses violence as a form of oppression. Many may experience one or more, or none of, the other faces of oppression, but we are all vulnerable to violence, which, in the simplest terms, is the use of force to inflict injury or harm to another. Applying these faces of oppression to the social problem of agricultural labor exploitation helps to specify and elaborate it, demonstrating its persistence and its social causes and consequences.

The social problem of agricultural worker exploitation has existed since before the formal inception of this country and can be seen as caused by the policies that enable it. Following the extermination of Native Americans through violence and disease, colonists recognized that their exploitation of North American resources was "slowed by a shortage of servants and slaves" (Crosby 2003, 213). Since then, federal legislation has continued to advocate and protect (mostly white) farm owners. An example of this type of legislation includes the Immigrant Act of 1917 which aimed to restrict immigration but included an exception for those who were seeking agricultural work.

Later, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 forbade employers in nearly every industry, except agriculture, from firing workers for joining or organizing a union. At that time, many farmworker positions were held by African Americans. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which passed three years later, again denied farmworkers a basic standard of minimum wage and overtime pay. It would appear that President Roosevelt was under pressure to push through social and economic reforms of the New Deal. U.S. congressional members negotiated that the social and racial plantation system of the South would be preserved. The system reproduced the subjugation of blacks and other minorities and has had lasting implications for agricultural labor (Linder 1987). The social problem of agricultural worker exploitation continues in current day and reflects the faces of oppression described above.

Immigrant agricultural workers are often excluded from common narratives about improving the food system. Wald (2011), for example, points to Michael Pollan's article "The Food Movement, Rising" in the *New York Times Review of Books*. Pollan provides a list of issues related to efforts to reform the food system:

> school lunch reform; the campaign for animal rights and welfare; the campaign against genetically modified crops; the rise of organic and locally produced food; efforts to

> combat obesity and type 2 diabetes; 'food sovereignty' (the principle that nations should be allowed to decide their agricultural policies rather than submit to free trade regimes); farm bill reform; food safety regulations; farmland preservation; student organizing around food issues on campus; efforts to promote urban agriculture and ensure that communities have access to healthy food; initiatives to create gardens and cooking classes in schools; farm worker rights; nutrition labeling; feedlot pollution; and the various efforts to regulate food ingredients and marketing, especially to kids. (Wald 2011, 568)

While Pollan does include "farm worker rights," his omission of details like "immigrant," or "migrant" or "undocumented" diminishes the crises imposed upon immigrant agriculutural laborthrough othering and exploitation. Undocumented workers are especially vulnerable because their status leaves them with few rights or protections. Additionally, omitting the word "immigrant" glosses over the identities of the people who are providing the labor for the food system – it contributes to their overall invisibility, which, in turn, makes it easier for society to continue to marginalize and exploit them. The following section elaborates the social problem of agricultural labor exploitation, providing context and examples of how this population are subjected to the five faces of oppression.

Oppression is rooted in a power differential; exploitation is one facet of oppression. Young explains that "Labor power is the one commodity by which in the process of being consumed produces new value" (I. M. Young 1990, 61). Examples of this type of exploitation among immigrant agricultural workers include poverty wages; many workers earn $15,999-$17,499 per year (Bon Appetit 2011). In addition to paltry wages, workers are also vulnerable to wage theft while more powerful food system actors profit from their labor. Lastly, policies such as the Fair Labor Standards Act do not provide basic protections afforded to workers in other industries such as a guaranteed minimum wage or overtime pay.

Marginalization is less quantifiable than exploitation, but that does not diminish its significance. Young explains that marginalized people are "expelled from useful participation in

social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination" (I. M. Young 1990, 63). Even though undocumented agricultural workers play an invaluable role in keeping food prices low, which allows producers to make some profit (Sbicca et al. 2020), their undocumented status also provents them from participating in entitlement programs including welfare, SNAP benefits, housing assistance, Medicaid and Social Security (Bauer 2010). Those who are undocumented lack the stability of those who hold an H-2A visitor worker visa, as their work is at the whim of their employers (Sbicca et al. 2020). Lastly, because of their status and fear of detection and/or deportation, they will forgo emergency medical attention – something to which they are entitled (Bauer 2010, Sbicca et al. 2020).

Powerlessness is an obvious aspect of the power imbalance exercised in oppression of immigrant agricultural labor. The powerless are those who "have little or no work autonomy, exercise little creativity or judgement in their work, have no technical expertise or judgement…and do not command respect" (I. M. Young 1990, 65). Agricultural work is dangerous and physically demanding but it is often considered unskilled labor, which further diminishes the value, and power, of this labor group. Additionally, the demographics of this labor force contribute to their powerlessness. Of the 1.4 million agricultural workers in the United States, 54% of them identify being of Mexican origin while an additional 7% identify as being Hispanic "other" (USDA 2022). Many of these workers have had minimal education, low rates of literacy and minimal English skills (Bon Appetit 2011). There are often barriers for workers to access English language classes because they are either not permitted to participate or because of other responsibilities (Holmes 2013).

Another aspect of powerlessness is the lack of access to collective bargaining. Just as policies prevent this population access to basic protections like a guaranteed minimum wage,

they are also excluded from engaging in activities that provide mutual aid and benefit (Bon Appetit 2011). Federal law provides employers the right to fire a worker for joining a labor union. In June 2021, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that allowing union organizers to recruit or interact with agricultural workers at their workplace violated the constitutional right of their employer (Liptak 2021). This ruling limits a practical way for union organizers to access a population that is often poorly educated, and because of the nature of the work, transient, further diminishing access to the power of collective bargaining.

Powerlessness is rooted in preventing a person access to social and economic mobility, while violence is about imposing physical control over another. In the simplest terms, violence is the intent to inflict harm on another. While we are all vulnerable to violence, those who are without access to protections or legal recourse are especially vulnerable. Sexual harassment and sexual violence are pervasive among many immigrant farmworker communities; because of their undocumented status, victims are reluctant to report it. In addition to sexual violence, workers may also experience violence through human trafficking and forced labor. Traffickers will recruit people with promises of work and good wages and then confiscate passports and threaten violence against workers or their families. Isolation from assistance, lack of language skills, no documentation, and threats to their own safety or the safety of their families prevent workers from seeking help.

The power differentials that drive the concepts of oppression, marginalization, powerlessness and violence would not exist if it were not for cultural imperialism. Young describes cultural imperialism as an experience that "renders a particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's own group and mark it as Other" (I. M. Young 1990, 66). While the United States celebrates its diversity by using metaphorical

platitudes such as "melting pot" or "nation of immigrants," immigrants have historically been met with suspicion and hostility (Epps and Furman 2016, J. G. Young 2017). Epps and Furman (2016) point out that it is easier to blame the "other" for social and economic woes rather than addressing the systemic issues themselves, especially when we use dehumanizing terms such as "wetback," "aliens," or "illegals" (2016, np).

This list of examples of the social consequences of immigrant agricultural labor exploitation is not exhaustive and there is overlap among the different faces of oppression experienced by immigrant agricultural workers. In terms of addressing the causes of this social problem, there are efforts to amend the status quo to something more equitable for immigrant agricltural workers, but oppression is still underwritten by U.S. policies and politics. In summary, labor exploitation is a social problem with severe and negative social consequences driven by the social causes of poor policy and politics. How these policies and politics reproduce this social problem is the focus of this Capstone research.

The next section will explain aspects of the social problem I explore in this research by articulating the research problem and overall research question.

Capstone Research Problem and Overall Research Question

This section identifies the Capstone research problem, the aspects of the social problem of immigrant farm labor exploitation that I wish to explore through this research, as well as an overall research question that reflects the research problem.

The five faces of oppression experienced by immigrant farmworkers clearly illustrate the social injustices of the social problem of immigrant labor exploitation in the United States. Of these injustices, this Capstone research focuses on the othering of immigrant farmworkers and

narratives that position them as threats. This research also examines how threats to immigrant agricultural workers' livelihood and well-being have been documented by academic research. Fear and threat are two sides to the same coin – fear is the emotional response caused by the belief that something, or someone, is a threat to safety or well-being. A threat is a statement or action that indicates an intention to inflict pain, injury, or some other hostile action. The United States society has a long history of inspiring fear and suspicion of new immigrant groups, especially those who were seen as too different to assimilate into the majority culture (J. G. Young 2017).

The United States has never been particularly hospitable to the predominately Latinx immigrant agricultural workers who have been the primary source of agricultural labor since World War II, but the September 11th terrorist attacks changed the public discourse on immigration (Andreas 2003, Epps and Furman 2016, J. G. Young 2017). Following the September 11th attacks, the undocumented immigrants crossing the southern border of the United States who were typically in search of work, were suddenly considered a "dangerous 'other'" who had become "a threat to national security" (Epps and Furman 2016, np). Sniderman et al. (2019) explain that terror attacks incite an emotional arousal which is a complex state, "anger can feed anxiety, anxiety on anger" (2019, 254). The authors go on to explain that this emotional state is not sustainable, "the salience of a terror attack fades. The media turn to concerns and issues that are regular stuff of headline news" (2019, 254). However, politicians and the media have capitalized on this event and the terror associated with the "other" to "frame undocumented immigrants and refugee resettlement as a national security threat" (J. G. Young 2017, 227).

Oppressors are manipulated by fear, but categorize it as a need for security, which serves to justify the resulting oppression of those they are made to fear. Examples of this type of

manipulation include the Patriot Act and Operation Endgame. The Patriot Act was passed just 45 days after the September 11th terrorist attacks. It included provisions for law enforcement to conduct secret searches to access private information including health, mental health, financial and student records with minimal judicial oversight (ACLU n.d.). The Patriot Act also included provisions for non-citizens, such as allowing law enforcement to jail people based on suspicion and deny them re-admission to the United States for engaging in free speech (ACLU n.d.).

Operation Endgame was a post-September 11th policy implemented by the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The goal of the plan was to "promote the public safety of national security by ensuring the departure from the United States of all removable aliens" over a 10-year period (Epps and Furman 2016). The implied message was clear: "if people of the United States are to be safe and the country secure, every undocumented immigrant must be apprehended, detained, and removed from society" (Epps and Furman 2016, np). It should be noted that none of the terrorists involved with the September 11th terrorist attacks entered the United States illegally or were undocumented. They were issued student, tourist, or business visas.

Infringement on civil rights and due process were sustained by fear, but justified by thought leaders through discourse focused on security. Fear can be produced by discourse and narratives. Discourse is the way in which we talk about different topics or ideas; it isn't just what we say, but the language we use to say it. Hall (2004) explains that "Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language" (Hall 2004, 346). Allen (2008) elaborates on Hall's definition as "a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular art of practice and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" (Allen 2008, 81). A narrative is similar to discourse; it is a way of

seeing the world, issues, or other groups of people that is "accepted as true by a critical mass of people" (Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021, 2). Both narratives and discourses inform and can manipulate how we experience the world and view specific issues.

A conceptual framework for understanding fear in narratives is the threat narrative. The threat narrative, as it relates to immigration, is "driven by insecurity whether related to economics, culture and identity, personal safety or national security" (Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021, 3). The targets of threat narratives – immigrants, in this case – can also experience fear as a result of these narratives and any oppression they underwrite. Therefore, the research problem of this Capstone research is to better understand how othering and fear contribute to the exploitation of immigrant farmworkers in the United States by operating through both the oppressors and the oppressed. Considering the perspectives of both the oppressed and the oppressor, my overall research question is: how are immigrant agricultural workers positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being and culture?

In asking this question, this research addresses the exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers in the United States by asking how they are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity so that I can better understand and challenge narratives that reproduce their exploitation.

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This chapter has provided definitions and context for concepts that are fundamental for this research including food systems and society, social justice, and social problems. This chapter explained the historical context for the social problem of immigrant farmworker exploitation in the United States, as well as elaborated on the five faces of oppression and provided contextual examples related to the social problem presented in this research. Lastly, this chapter presented

the overall research problem and overall research question that is explored in this research, and introduced the conceptual frameworks of othering and threat narratives.

The following chapter explains the methodology and methods employed in this research.

Three—Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology and methods used to address the Overall Capstone Research Question, which is, how are immigrant agricultural laborers positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being and cultural identity? The first section of this chapter will introduce and explain my research paradigm of critical inquiry, as well as my positionality relative to the research question. The next section, Capstone Research Questions, will revisit the social problem and research problem that were introduced in the previous chapter and articulate the constitutive questions that will address the overall research question. This section will also elaborate the conceptual frameworks applied to the constitutive research questions. Lastly, the research design used for this Capstone research is described.

The next section, Capstone Research Paradigm, first describes the analytical lens through which this research is conducted.

Capstone Research Paradigm

Research is an ongoing conversation that contributes to our collective knowledge. In research, scholars examine data through different research paradigms, or analytical lenses, which yield different interpretations and results. Research paradigms commonly used in the social sciences include positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Researchers who employ positivism are "realists" who approach research empirically, seeking a single truth. Postpositivist research paradigms take a modified approach to positivism. The two paradigms share some epistemological positions, meaning perspectives on how they come to know and create knowledge about the world. However, while positivists believe that truths are absolute, the postpositivist approach is that findings, or truth, are *probably* true (Lincoln 2017). Constructivists believe that understanding and knowledge of the world is individual and based on

experience and perception (Lincoln 2017). Lastly, as a research paradigm, critical theory, or inquiry, is a paradigm that "seeks to expose, oppose, and redress forms of oppression, inequality, and injustice" (Charmaz 2017, 5). Denzin (2017) describes a need for critical qualitative research because its "avowed social justice commitment focuses inquiry on research that makes a difference in the lives of socially oppressed persons" (Denzin 2017, 9). This Capstone research is based on examining imbalances in power structures that oppress immigrant farmworkers by using the conceptual framework of cultural imperialism, or "othering" included in Young's (1990) "Five Faces of Oppression" and the threat narrative described in Chapter Two.

The exploitation of immigrant labor is a clear example of social injustice so critical inquiry is an appropriate research paradigm to use as a means to analyze associated injustices and advocate for or educate others as a means to address the injustice (Charmaz 2017). Critical inquirers approach research as "an activist and transformative intellectual" (Lincoln 2017, 684), but it is impossible for any researcher to be fully impartial. Scholars are influenced, consciously or not, through their positionality. The following addresses how my own situatedness influences this research.

Positionality is uniquely individual. I subscribe to Jensen and Glasmeier's (2010) explanation of situatedness in critical inquiry research in recognizing the importance of making explicit the researcher's positionality as it influences and informs how information is reported and received. My initial introduction to the food studies and food systems world was through popular literature from writers like Michael Pollan, Marion Nestle, and Anna Lappé. I do not want to dismiss the work these authors have contributed to the discourse on food systems and society, but much of their writing is from the experience of the end-user, the consumer. Further,

their books were written by white privileged authors writing largely for a white privileged audience.

As I have progressed through this program, I have gained new insight into the plight of the immigrant agricultural laborer. Their health and well-being are fundamental to a healthy, functioning food system; we have seen this first-hand as we have continued to endure the systemic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am also fascinated by the psychology that feeds into a nationalist mindset, which can, and does, have profound effects on elections, public safety, and immigrant policy.

As a white, middle-class woman, systemic privileges have shielded me from many social injustices. It is because of this systemic privilege that I have doubted the validity of my role as a scholar researching this social problem. I recognized that I will never truly know what it is like to experience marginalization, powerlessness, othering, or fear the way an immigrant agricultural worker might, but I can use my privilege to advocate for change.

This program has shone an unyielding light on the many flaws in our social fabric. I now readily recognize systemic inequities and flaws; once you see them, you can't unsee them and you see them everywhere. It is my hope that this research will contribute to a more equitable future for food systems labor through a better understanding of ourselves.

This section introduced and explained critical inquiry as the paradigm used in this research and explained my positionality in relation to this research. The following section will revisit the social problem and research problem that were introduced in Chapter Two and introduce the constitutive research question and corresponding conceptual frameworks that will address the overall research question.

Capstone Research Questions

This section reviews the social problem and research problem that were introduced in the previous chapter and articulates the constitutive research questions that will collectively address the overall research question asked in this Capstone.

The social problem I address in this this research is the ongoing exploitation of immigrant agricultural laborers in the United States. As discussed in Chapter Two, a social problem is one that causes harm to an individual or group and has social causes, social consequences, and social cures. The exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers in the United States is a social problem because workers' exploitation means they receive inequitable access to resources (harm); it is caused by poor social policies and politics that allow for the reproduction of exploitation and suffering (cause). Critical inquiry, as a research paradigm, addresses this type of power and inequality injustice (Charmaz 2017). As such, the related research problem this research will consider is how the exploitation of immigrant agricultural labor in the United States are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity? Therefore, the overall research question that this research addresses is: How are immigrant agricultural laborers positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity?

The overall research question about how immigrant agricultural laborers are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity is addressed in this research through two constitutive research questions. The first question is, how do political narratives position immigrant agricultural workers as threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity? The second question is, how have threats to immigrant agricultural workers' safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity been documented in literature? By considering

both sides of the admittedly-unbalanced power dynamic between thought leaders and a vulnerable population, I will evaluate how fear is weaponized and therefore contributes to the ongoing exploitation of agricultural workers in the United States so that I can better understand and challenge narratives that reproduce their exploitation.

This research utilizes two conceptual frameworks to address the constitutive research questions. For the first constitutive research question, the conceptual frameworks are othering and threat narrative. A narrative is a way we see the world, through stories we tell ourselves and others, that shape what we think and how we interact with the world (Ciovacco 2020, Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021). A threat narrative is one that speaks to our individual or collective vulnerability. Banulescu-Bogdan et al. point out that narratives do not need to be accurate to "be persuasive, and indeed, may gain currency precisely by oversimplifying, distorting, and omitting details" (2021, 9). Ciovacco (2020) elaborates on this point, noting that many of our narratives are informed by news headlines or a ten-minute news roundup. He further explains that Americans are too busy and are generally unwilling to refute a threat narrative statement. He elaborates, "If the TV in the office breakroom displays FOX or CNN programming, people getting their morning coffee will passively hear these narratives in an almost subliminal way…this broad brush generalization does not apply to all Americans, but it does capture how threat narratives create a subjective narrative that can run contrary to an object threat truth" (Ciovacco 2020, 51). It is the vulnerability inspired by the personal nature of this type of narrative that leads to fear.

Political speech is both a narrative and a form of discourse. As described in Chapter Two, narratives, or the stories we tell ourselves and others, reflect a way of seeing the world or other groups of people. The stories we tell then influence and inform discourse on a specific topic.

Discourse is rooted more in language – it isn't just what we say, but the language we use to say it. Political speech is a form of discourse/narrative that is used as a means to connect and persuade. It constructs narratives about immigration, for example, in order to influence politics and policy. This is a significant category to consider because given the reach that thought leaders and elected officials have, utilizing narratives, specifically a threat narrative, is a powerful tool used to dictate the public discourse and influence public favor.

The second conceptual framework used to address the first constitutive research question is "othering." Young's "Five Faces of Oppression" are all the result of an imbalance of power – some are privileged while others are oppressed. Othering, as Young defines it, is the result of cultural imperialism. She explains that culturally dominated groups are both marked as different and rendered invisible, or less than (I. M. Young 1990, 67). One consequence of othering is that "othered" groups are segregated and often "occupy specific positions in the social division of labor" (I. M. Young 1990, 67). Borrero et al. (2012) expands on Young's definition, defining othering as "a personal, social, cultural, and historical experience involving (a) cultural and racial ambiguity; (b) categorizing and labeling; (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources" (3). Cultural and racial ambiguity as well as categorization and labeling address cultural and racial discrimination while hierarchical power dynamics clearly address the imbalances of power, this describes a binary relationship of insider versus outsider or us versus them (Borrero et al. 2012). "Othering" diminishes personal and social value of a certain group of people. Because they are seen as "other," they are more vulnerable. Lastly, Borrero describes the consequences of othering through marginalization when he discusses how those who are othered have limited access to resources that would improve social mobility and economic stability (Borrero et al. 2012). The concept of "othering" can have other consequences as well. A group

with diminished social value makes the othered group vulnerable to different types of scapegoating for a variety of social problems. This echoes the concept of BVI, where those who are seen as outside mainstream normative standards are undesireable or problematic. This includess thought leaders capitalizing on the fear of the "other", and rather than protecting the vulnerable group, utilizes their positions as "less than" or "different from" in threat narratives.

The second consitutive question will use the conceptual framework of the threat narrative as described above in order to identify the threats faced by immigrant agricultural laborers. Instead of applying the conceptual framework to analyze how political speech positions immigrant agricultural laborers as threats, it will use academic literature to better understand how researchers have documented the threats faced by immigrant agricultural laborers.

This section revisited the social problem, research problem and research statement presented in this research. This section also presented the constitutive questions that will inform the overall research question, which is how are immigrant agricultural workers positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. Conceptual frameworks including threat narrative, othering, powerlessness, and marginalization were explained and contextualized as to how they will inform the constitutive resarch questions. The following section explains the research design used in the Capstone research.

Capstone Research Design

This research considers how fear contributes to the ongoing exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers in the United States. This section identifies and explains the research design used to address each constitutive question. This section is organized by individual constitutive

questions and explains their units of analysis, methodological approach, units of observation, data sources, scope, and analytical criteria.

Constitutive Research Question One: How do political narratives position immigrant agricultural workers as threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity?

For this question, the unit of analysis is political speech. The methodological approach for addressing this unit of analysis is qualitative content analysis because it focuses on the characteristics of language and the content and contextual meaning of the text (Hsieh 2005). For the purpose of this question, I will utilize the summative approach to qualitative content analysis, which involves comparing content in order to provide an interpretation and analysis of its overall meaning and the underlying context (Hsieh 2005), because I am interested to learn how U.S. political leaders use language to "other" and invoke fear of immigrants. The research scope is limited to select speeches from sitting presidents and presidential nominees since 2001. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the narrative about immigration changed following the September 11th terrorist attacks that resulted in a focus on national and border security. The units of observation for this question are instances of political speech invoking immigrants. The data source is select political speeches addressing immigration and national security delivered by sitting presidents or presidential nominees since 2001. The sources for these speeches are from individual websites, such as those from a presidential library, or from verified online archives from the University of California, Santa Barbara collection. Given the number of political speeches, the sample size is limited to a single speech for sitting presidents or nominees with the exception of Donald Trump, where I examined his campaign launch speech, his inaugural address, and a speech he delivered from the White House as part of the Administration's effort to end the partial government shut down in late 2018 to early 2019. I included additional speeches

by President Trump because he crafted much of his 2016 campaign messaging and platform on invoking immigrants while advocating for his "Make American Great Again" agenda. President Trump is the most recent sitting president included, this research does not include any speeches from Joseph Biden or Donald Trump's 2020 presidential campaigns.

The data analysis strategy for this question was coding of speeches based on analytical criteria derived from the definition of a threat narrative. The analytical categories used include threats or insecurity related to economics, culture and identity, personal safety, and national security. Specific analytical criteria for economics-related threats include references to job loss, resource use, and budgets. The analytical criteria for culture- and identity-related threats include references to assimilation, language, "the American way" or "our way[s] of life." Lastly, the specific analytical criteria for personal safety or security-related threats include references to safety, criminals, criminality, or anything referring to causing harm.

I will also categorize and organize the data based on the presence of instances of othering. The analytical criteria used to identify instances of othering in political speeches include anything that profiles immigrants as "other" or creates a binary relationship such as "us versus them" in reference to U.S. citizens and non-citizens. Political speeches may include some, none, or all of the criteria as described in the threat narrative and othering. Coding and categorizing will allow the results to be impartial.

Constitutive Research Question Two: how have threats to immigrant agricultural workers' safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity been documented in literature?

For this question, the unit of analysis is explanations of threats faced by immigrant agricultural laborers in literature. Exploring this unit of analysis will help to understand documented threats faced by immigrant agricultural workers, even as they may be positioned as

threats themselves. The methodological approach for this question is a literature review, specifically a scoping literature review. The scoping literature review allows for "the inclusion of research from a wide array of disciplines and epistemological traditions" (Terstappen et al. 2013, 22). Like Terstappen et. al. (2013), I am uninterested in evaluating other scholars' methodologies. My objective is to review a wide variety of sources to provide a comprehensive view of immigrant agricultural workers' situations as they relate to the different categories of threats within the threat narrative. The scope of this question will include scholarship since 1935, immigrant-related agricultural worker case studies since 2010 as well as advocacy organization literature and popular media from 2016-present. The scope is such because I want to capture a comprehensive picture of the immigrant workers' situation over time, but emphasize the contemporary context in line with the analysis of more contemporary political speeches. The units of observation for this question are explanations in literature of the situations of farmworkers as they relate to aspects of the threat narrative. The data collection strategy included a search for a broad breadth of literature including academic journal articles, case studies, and books addressing both historical as well as contemporary accounts of oppression of immigrant labor in the United States. I searched library databases using keyword phrases including "immigrant labor," "migrant labor," and "undocumented labor exploitation."

Data collected to answer this question will be organized and analyzed using analytical criteria derived from the conceptual framework of the threat narrative. More specifically, analytical criteria of the threat narrative include threats to personal safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. In data analysis, I looked specifically for examples that describe aspects of the threat narrative that were imposed upon immigrant agricultural workers.

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This chapter has introduced research paradigms commonly used in social science research and explained why critical inquiry is the appropriate paradigm for this research. This chapter also provided an overview of the constitutive research questions that will inform the overall research question addressed in this research. In addition, this section reviewed the conceptual frameworks used in this research including threat narratives and othering. Lastly, this section provided a detailed overview of the methodologies used to collect and analyze the data to inform the constitutive and overall research questions presented by this Capstone.

The next chapter presents the research applications and contributions of this research.

Four—Research Applications and Contribution

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research questions presented in this Capstone and explain my research's contribution to addressing the social problem of exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers. This Capstone problem focuses on their othering through remarks that position them as threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity, as well as how they may be subject to the same categories of threats. The first section will revisit the Overall Research Question which asks how immigrant agricultural workers are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. I will then briefly explain how and why the Overall Research Question addresses the social problem. The next section will introduce the two constitutive research questions and present the research findings and analysis for each question. The first question explores how political narratives position immigrant agricultural workers as threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. The second question looks at how threats to immigrant agricultural workers' safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity have been documented in literature. The last section will review the social problem explored in this research and detail this Capstone research's contribution to addressing the social problem of the reproduction of labor exploitation among immigrant agricultural workers.

This Capstone research focuses on answering the Overall Research Question which is: how are immigrant agricultural workers positioned as, and subject to, threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity? The first constitutive research question asks how they are positioned as threats in political narratives, the second constitutive research question asks how they are subject to the same threats. By better understanding how political narratives reproduce the social problem, these narratives can be made more visible and challenged. By better

understanding the threats faced by immigrant agricultural workers, I hope to make the social problem more visible to create better understanding of and compassion for those who contribute to our food system and society through agricultural labor.

Research Findings

This section reintroduces the constitutive research questions and the research findings and analysis for each question that is used to address the overall research question of this Capstone research which is: how are immigrant agricultural workers positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and culture? By examining this issue from the perspective of both the oppressors and the oppressed, I will gain a better understanding of the reproduction of labor exploitation among immigrant workers. For ease of reference, the speeches evaluated in the first constitutive research question are organized in chronological order. The second constitutive research question is organized by category of the threat narrative: safety, economic well-being, and culture. However, given the intersectionality of many of the threats imposed on farmworkers, there is considerable overlap. This is explained in more detail below.

The following sections detail each constitutive research question and its corresponding results and analysis.

How do political narratives position immigrant agricultural workers as threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity?

This question responds to the Overall Research Question by addressing the positioning immigrant agricultural laborers as threats in political speech, which may serve to reproduce the social problem of their exploitation. To answer this question, I evaluated speeches addressing immigration presented by sitting presidents or presidential nominees since 2001. This includes former President George W. Bush, Senator John McCain, Senator John Kerry, former Governor

Mitt Romney, Secretary Hillary Clinton, former President Barack Obama, and, former President Donald Trump. I evaluated these speeches looking for instances of othering immigrants as well as invoking aspects of the threat narrative. I provided context for each speech including the audience (when available) and location. The results are presented in chronological order.

Senator John Kerry

Senator Kerry's campaign remarks are from his address to the June 2004 meeting of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) in Washington, DC. NALEO is a non-partisan membership organization whose constituency includes Latino elected and appointed officials from across the country. Senator Kerry does not engage in "othering" but he does address the casualties from failed border crossings along the southern U.S. border. He also acknowledges undocumented workers who operate in the shadow economy "in fear and often abused" (Kerry 2004). He does appeal to the security aspect of the threat narrative, calling to "improve our border security, fix our watch lists, and make Mexico a real partner, so that our country is safe from those who'd harm us" (Kerry 2004). He also proposed a North American security perimeter to help crack down on "bad actors" trying to enter the United States and coordinating with border nations to enforce immigrant policies and protect the region from terrorist threats. It is a subtle, but direct, appeal to the threat narrative: we are vulnerable to outsiders.

Former President George W. Bush

President Bush was president during the September 11th terrorist attacks that redirected the public discourse about immigration. These remarks are from his visit to the U.S. Border Patrol station in Yuma, Arizona in April 2007 as he is approaching the end of his second term.

President Bush addresses every aspect of the threat narrative in these remarks, including insecurity about economics, culture and identity, and both personal safety and national security. He begins his remarks by complimenting the Border Patrol agents for their hard work, noting that during a previous visit, "people came charging across [the border]" and that agents were unable to "stop a flood of people charging into Arizona" (Bush 2007). This type of hyperbole speaks to the national security aspect of the threat narrative.

Bush also appealed to economic vulnerabilities, noting how immigration "puts pressure on the public schools and hospitals…It drains state and local budgets…Incarceration of criminals who are here illegally strains the Arizona budget. But there's a lot of other ways it strains local and state budgets" (Bush 2007). President Bush acknowledges that there are underlying economic reasons behind illegal immigration, and that past reforms have failed to address those reasons. He also acknowledges that most undocumented workers are providing for themselves and their families, and accepting jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. But, he uses language like "sneak in" which may invoke feelings of criminality and insecurity. He explicitly states that illegal immigration "brings crime to our communities" (Bush 2007) and advocates for secure borders for safety reasons "shut down to criminals and drug dealers and terrorists and coyotes and smugglers, people who prey on innocent life" (Bush 2007). Bush recognizes the value of a temporary worker program – he echoes Senator Kerry's comments about undocumented workers saying, "it will do something about the inhumane treatment these people are subjected to" (Bush 2007). This is one of the few times that the need for personal safety was directed *at* immigrants by addressing human trafficking and workplace protections. However, Bush does push for the rule of law, that undocumented residents should not be granted amnesty, "we're a nation of law, and we expect people to uphold the law" (Bush 2007).

Lastly, Bush calls for the need for immigrants to assimilate into "our society." He is clearly addressing the culture and identity aspect of the threat narrative, that immigrants should be "learning our history, our values, and our language" (Bush 2007). An implicit message in this narrative is that U.S. citizens must maintain national identity and cultural pride by demanding assimilation. To not do so would allow the "other" to erode our cultural foundation which would undermine the values that drive the threat narrative of national and cultural identity. Bush fully embraces the threat narrative playbook, but he seems to be making a case for addressing the vulnerabilities along the southern U.S. border. He notes the need to address "non-Mexican illegal aliens" attempting to cross the southern border, but he does not specify their countries of origin or elaborate on the perceived threat they may, or may not, pose to the safety of the United States.

Senator John McCain

Senator John McCain's campaign remarks are from his address to the annual meeting of the National Council of La Raza in San Diego, California in July 2008. La Raza, now known as UnidosUS, is a Latino non-profit organization that advocates in favor of progressive policy changes including immigration reform, a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and reduced deportation. Senator McCain served as U.S. senator for Arizona, a state that shares a border with Mexico, from 1987-2018. Senator McCain does not "other" immigrants in the speeches analyzed here. Instead, he refers to a recent debate on immigration that devolved into "denigrating the contributions of Hispanics to our great country. I denounced those insults then, and I denounce them today" (McCain 2008). He also values his Hispanic constituency, announcing during his speech that he had won 75 percent of the Hispanic vote in a recent Senate election. Senator

McCain focuses his overall messaging on improving the economy, but he does incorporate the threat narrative into his messaging, saying that his priorities, like President Bush,

include the rule of law. He states that he will "ensure respect for the laws of this country" and recognizing that the undocumented immigrants who have lived in the U.S. need to be addressed "without excusing the fact that they came here illegally or granting them privileges before those who have been waiting their turn outside the country" (McCain 2008). These types of statements indicate both the security aspect of the threat narrative as well as the cultural aspect, because McCain is clearly establishing values of fairness, morality, and responsibility (Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021). Underscoring his fidelity to the law above any constituency, McCain punctuates his statements with "we can't let immigrants break our laws with impunity" (McCain 2008). McCain also appeals to community and national security by addressing the need to apprehend those here to commit crimes and securing our borders, not leaving them "undefended" (McCain 2008). McCain, like Bush, takes a tough stance on illegal immigration and is appealing to those who subscribe to the security aspect of the threat narrative by reinforcing values that underscore the security narrative including fairness, morality, and responsibility as mentioned above.

Former Governor Mitt Romney

Former Governor Mitt Romney's June 2012 campaign speech is from when he addressed NALEO membership in Orlando, Florida.

Former Governor Romney doesn't "other" immigrants, but instead focuses on the economic benefits that immigrants bring to the United States. Romney does flirt with the threat narrative regarding security, but his approach is more matter-of-fact than insinuating that immigrants, especially the undocumented, are threats, "it is critical that we redouble our efforts to secure the border. That means both preventing illegal crossings and making it harder to illegally overstay a visa. We should field enough border agents, complete a high-tech fence, and

implement an improved exit verification system" (Romney 2012). Romney describes immigration reform as both a "moral imperative" as well as an "economic necessity" because of their economic contribution, noting that immigrants are "30% more likely to start a business" (Romney 2012). This is a stark contrast to the economic vulnerability aspect of the threat narrative which includes fear of job loss and use of publicly funded resources like schools and healthcare.

Former President Barack Obama

President Obama delivered remarks at Del Sol High School in Henderson, Nevada approximately one week after his second inauguration in late January 2013. This speech is a compilation of different messaging. For example, President Obama does not "other" immigrants, he celebrates the diversity of the U.S. noting "we define ourselves as a nation of immigrants" (Obama 2013). However, he also describes the 11 million people living and working in the "shadow" economy that John Kerry referenced in his 2004 speech. Obama also acknowledges the value and importance of retaining immigrants who started business listing companies such as Instagram, Google, and Yahoo!.

President Obama does invoke immigrants and uses language that responds to the threat narrative: "First, we strengthened security at the border so that we could finally stem the tide of illegal immigrants. We put more boots on the ground on the southern border than any time in our history. And today, illegal crossings are down nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000. Second, we focused our enforcement efforts on criminals who are here illegally and who endanger our communities. And today, deportations of criminals is at its highest level ever" (Obama 2013). He primarily focuses on the security aspect of the threat narrative, his word choice "stem the tide",

"boots on the ground" and "endanger our communities" is a conscious spin to appease and reassure those who subscribe to the threat narrative as it relates to immigration.

Secretary Hillary Clinton

Secretary Clinton's speech to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) took place in Washington, DC in September 2016, just a few weeks before the general election. The CHCI is a Hispanic non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to developing the next generation of leaders. Secretary Clinton's speech does invoke immigrants where she seems to celebrate the diversity of the Hispanic/Latinx communities in the United States. Further, she seems to be responding to threat narrative statements used by her opponent, Donald Trump: "Whether you're Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Latin American, Afro-Latino, whether your family just arrived here or has been here since before the United States even existed, you're not strangers. You're not intruders. You're our neighbors, our colleagues, our friends, our family. You make our nation stronger, smarter, more creative. And I want you to know that I see you and I am with you" (Clinton 2016). Secretary Clinton does mention the need for immigration reform and a path to citizenship, but she does not vilify the undocumented or present them as a threat. Instead, she directs her criticisms at Donald Trump's divisive campaign tactics and messaging.

Former President Donald Trump

Secretary Clinton's 2016 remarks fall between President Trump's campaign launch speech in 2015 and his 2017 inaugural address, but both speeches are analyzed here with his comments about the U.S. southern border in 2019.

Campaign launch speech

Donald Trump presented his campaign launch speech in June 2015 at the Trump Tower in New York City. Trump's speech quickly descends into immigrant othering and utilizing the threat narrative. His speech begins with criticisms of U.S. business deals when he abruptly shifts to immigration and othering: "When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they are killing us economically" (Trump 2015). While it is not clear about what he means by beating Mexico at the border, he is clearly subscribing to the economic aspect of the threat narrative. Trump is appealing to scarcity tactics by framing Mexico and Mexican immigrants as an economic threat and adversary because they will draw jobs away from the U.S. to a cheaper labor market and/or Mexican immigrants will work for less money, thereby undermining the stability of the U.S. labor market.

Trump follows up his complaint that Mexico is beating us at the border with, "The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems" (2015). This is a broad statement, but one that also establishes a binary relationship of "us versus them," an example of othering. Further, this statement has veiled threat narrative characteristics - "everybody else's problems" are a threat to the safety, economic well-being and cultural identity of the United States. He continues, saying, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people who have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" (2015). In these statements, Trump continues to "other" by referring to Mexican immigrants as not "the best" and calling them drug mules/dealers/abusers and rapists. This type of rhetoric also folds in the personal safety aspect of the threat narrative. Trump briefly alludes to a conversation with border agents who "tell us what we're getting" and "They're not sending us the right

people" (2015). Referencing border agents also invokes the national security and personal safety aspects of the threat narrative. Trump continues using the safety aspect of the threat narrative by invoking the unknown "It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably – probably – from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop and it's got to stop fast" (2015). Casting doubt on the effectiveness and competence of border security is another clear appeal to the safety aspect of the threat narrative.

President Trump rather abruptly changes tack away from immigration. The speech is disjointed and difficult to follow, but there are a few references to the economic aspect of the threat narrative interspersed within his remarks: "A lot of people up there can't get jobs. They can't get jobs because there are no jobs, because China has our jobs and Mexico has our jobs. They all have jobs" and "They're going to build in Mexico. They're going to take away thousands of jobs" (2015). Trump positions himself as the solution to the perception of the ongoing economic aspect of the threat narrative, "I'll bring back our jobs from China, from Mexico, from Japan, from so many places. I'll bring back our jobs, and I'll bring back our money" (2015). Trump again shifts his focus for the remainder of the speech providing personal anecdotes and a rambling list of campaign promises, including building a wall along the southern U.S. border: "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will make Mexico pay for that wall" (Trump 2015). This is a fairly loaded statement. Trump is appealing to the threat narrative by promising to build a wall to protect U.S. citizens from the undesirable other, but it is also an appeal to American exceptionalism by promising that Mexico

would fund the construction. Following his comment about the wall, Trump no longer directly addresses immigration or utilizes the threat narrative for the remainder of his remarks.

Inaugural speech

President Trump's inaugural speech was delivered in Washington, DC in January 2017. His remarks were relatively brief. While he does not specifically "other" immigrants, he does cite companies moving operations off-shore and government mismanagement while allowing domestic infrastructure to crumble. This type of narrative appeals to a constituency base that subscribes to the economic vulnerability of the threat narrative. Trump's response is: "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs…We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams" (Trump 2017). The last few paragraphs of his speech address unity and American prosperity, but nothing specific to othering or the threat narrative relevant to immigrant populations.

Remarks on border security and the government shutdown

President Trump presented these remarks from the White House in Washington, DC in January 2019. In them, President Trump uses all facets of the threat narrative. Similar to Bush and McCain, he invokes the rule of law. He also touches on the cultural aspect of the threat narrative: "We believe in a safe and lawful system of immigration, one that upholds our laws, our traditions, and our most cherished values" (Trump 2019). He continues by elaborating on safety issues regarding migrants traveling to the southern U.S. border, describing threat of sexual violence toward women: "many loving mothers give their young daughters birth control pills for the long journey up to the United States because they know they may be raped or sexually accosted or assaulted (2019). Trump addresses resource use, which is a sub-category of the

economic aspect of the threat narrative, when he refers to drug use and trafficking in the U.S.: "Drugs kill 78,000 Americans a year and cost society in excess of $700 million. Heroin alone kills 300 Americans a week, 90 percent of which comes across the southern border" (2019). Trump elaborates on the resource aspect of the threat narrative by stating that "Illegal immigration reduces wages and strains public services" (2019). This positioning of immigration as an economic threat is followed by employing the personal safety and national security aspect of the threat narrative, "The lack of border control provides a gateway – and a very wide and open gateway – for criminals and gang members to enter the United States, including criminal aliens who murdered a brave California police officer only a day after Christmas" (2019). He continues to use the safety aspect of the threat narrative in his messaging: "It is time to reclaim our future from the extreme voices who fear compromise and demand open borders, which means drugs pouring in, human trafficking, and a lot of crime" (2019). Trump uses the threat narrative to justify the need for a wall, or barrier, along the southern border of the U.S.:

> Walls are not immoral. In fact, they are the opposite of immoral because they save many lives and stop drugs from pouring into our country … If we build a powerful and fully designed see-through steel barrier on our southern border, the crime rate and drug problem in our country would be quickly and greatly reduced. Because these criminals, drug smugglers, gangs, and traffickers do not stop at our border; they permeate throughout our country and they end up in some places where you'd least expect them. (2019)

This is an effective use of the threat narrative. Trump eliminates the idea that threats are localized to just the southern border, suggesting that all communities are vulnerable to crime, criminality and human suffering from drug use and human trafficking. The use of the word "permeate" seems intentional. The act of permeating feels slow and almost unnoticeable, but deliberate. This speaks to positioning undocumented immigrants as sneaky, suspicious, and untrustworthy. Trump's description that "they end up in some places where you'd least expect

them" (2019) also plays into vulnerability and fear and makes undocumented immigrants sound like a social malignancy that just appears. Trump concludes his remarks with a final appeal of the threat narratives, specifically safety and economics: "Any reform we make to our immigration system will be designed to improve your lives, make your communities safer, and make our nation more prosperous and secure for generations to come" (2019). This statement clearly positions immigrants as a threat to personal and community safety and implies that immigrants are a financial drain on job availability and public resources which are both aspects of the economic aspect of the threat narrative.

These three speeches are vastly different from one another, but they are representative of Trump's use of both othering and the threat narrative as part of his messaging strategy.

Threat Narratives in Political Speech

The nine political speeches reviewed for this research provide a wide range of opinions regarding undocumented immigrants and their position as threats to economic well-being, safety, and cultural identity to the people of the United States. Many of the politicians do not position undocumented immigrants as threats, but some do. The following provides an analysis of the data presented above, organized by the three major categories of the threat narrative. First, I will address threats to the economy, then personal safety and national security, and then cultural identity.

The economic aspect of the threat narrative was among the most obvious of the three categories of the threat narrative. Presidents Bush and Trump cited the use of tax dollars to support public services used by undocumented immigrants. President Trump used a more general term, "strains public services" (Trump 2019), while President Bush was more specific, "it [illegal immigration] puts pressure on the public schools and hospitals…Incarceration of criminals who

are here illegally strains the Arizona budget" (Bush 2007). This type of messaging tells constituents that while undocumented immigrants may not actively seek out to affect anyone's economic well-being, their very presence diminishes access to public services, which, in turn, a constituent could interpret as a threat to their ability to prosper and overall economic well-being.

Presidents Obama and Trump also positioned undocumented immigrants as a threat to economic well-being through compensation and wages. Again, Trump used open, general comments, "Illegal immigration reduces wages" (Trump 2019). President Obama (2013) is more specific when addressing the circumstances that affect 11 million workers in the "shadow economy":

> Often they [undocumented immigrants] do that in a shadow economy – a place where employers may offer them less than the minimum wage or make them work overtime without extra pay. And when that happens, it's not just bad for them, it's bad for the entire economy. Because all the businesses that are trying to do the right thing – that are hiring people legally, paying a decent wage, following the rules – they're the ones who suffer. They've got to compete against companies that are breaking the rules. And the wages and working conditions of American workers are threatened, too. (Obama 2013)

Constituents working in specific sectors, especially among the working class, may feel particularly vulnerable to undocumented immigrants who are willing to work for less, and thereby see undocumented immigrants as a threat to their economic well-being.

Several of the speeches reviewed for this question referenced the need to maintain national security and the importance of personal safety. For example, Senator McCain, Senator Kerry, President Obama, and President Bush all acknowledge the need to address criminals who are in the U.S. illegally, but they do not position most undocumented immigrants as threats. President Bush clarifies the difference: "And that way our Border Patrol can chase the criminals and the drug runners, potential terrorists, and not have to chase people who are coming here to do work Americans are not doing" (Bush 2007). However, Donald Trump intentionally positions

undocumented immigrants as threats. During his remarks announcing his candidacy for president in 2015, he states that "The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems" meaning immigration. He elaborates, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best…They're sending people who have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems to us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Trump 2015). Trump is clearly positioning undocumented immigrants as threats to safety. His vitriol is not limited to Mexico, "It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably – probably – from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop and it's got to stop fast" (Trump 2015). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, President Trump's campaign launch speech is disjointed, confusing, and difficult to follow. There are a few possible explanations for this: he may have had prepared remarks that he did not practice or follow, he may have had notes that allowed him to address the audience off-the-cuff, or it is also possible that his delivery approach was intentional. It is unclear to what Trump is referring when he talks about "it's" coming from Mexico or South and Latin America or the Middle East. Is he referring to immigrants? The problems that drive immigration? The needs immigrants require? Something else entirely? Even Trump says that "we don't know," (2015). He does emphasize that whatever "it" is, it needs to end quickly. While these gaps in logic and thought are bewildering, it is possible that President Trump was capitalizing on the insecurities and fears expressed by his supporters. The lack of specificity and open-ended ideas coupled with negative and scary descriptors associated with a specific nationality plays right into the threat narrative. Banulescu-Bogdan et al. (2021) explain that threats to personal safety can be particularly destabilizing and difficult to defuse, even with evidence (18) and that threat

narratives gain currency "by oversimplifying, distorting, and omitting details" (2021, 9). The gaps and incomplete thoughts allow Trump's supporters to project their own fears or insecurities while still experiencing validation from a trusted source.

Trump's 2019 remarks take a slightly more moderate approach to safety and immigration, but just barely. While he does not target a specific group or call anyone "rapists," he does discuss the possibility of sexual violence that women and girls may experience during their journey to the United States. He also cites specific illegal drugs that are trafficked across the southern U.S. border as well as criminal and gang activity, including the death of a California police officer. A closer review of his 2019 remarks revealed that he does not mention a single country by name, instead, he refers only to the "southern border" and "Central American minors" (Trump 2019). This was another intentional omission – distancing himself from targeting one specific group will also create insecurity about all migrants who live below the southern U.S. border.

The last category of the threat narrative is cultural identity, which encompasses language, values, and lifestyle. There are a few instances of politicians citing the need for immigrants to assimilate into the "American" way, but there was no evidence of politicians positioning undocumented immigrants as a threat to the cultural identity of the United States. Instead, evidence supports more strongly that the economic and safety aspects of the threat narrative are present in political speeches about immigrant populations.

This small data sample is taken from a snapshot in time – nine speeches over a twelve-year period following a catastrophic event that changed the discourse about U.S. national security and immigration. That said, these speeches are representative of that time in history. In some cases, the speakers are responding to the fears and anxieties of the American people; in

other cases, they are creating fear and anxiety. It is important to clarify that with the exception of G.W. Bush, none of the politicians specifically referenced immigrant farmworkers. Instead, they refer to undocumented immigrants – farmworkers are a part of this group.

All of these speeches were delivered with the hopes of advancing politics and policies. Politicians are either running for office or trying to advance their own political agendas. By utilizing othering and/or positioning immigrants as threats, they are using the issue of immigration as political capital while giving little consideration to those who are caught in the political crosshairs. Presidents Bush and Obama did position immigrants as threats, but did so with caveats, that most undocumented immigrants are harmless neighbors doing what is necessary to provide for themselves and their families. President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric was an exception, but it will probably have lasting effects on the discourse about immigration. That said, citing issues like resource use or lower wages, especially to poor, working, or middle-class voters, is an effective tactic to diminish the human value of undocumented immigrant labor. If we perceive someone to have diminished value, or we are resentful of their mere presence, it is likely that society will continue to allow the reproduction of labor exploitation.

The second constitutive question will address aspects of the threat narrative from the perspective of immigrant farmworkers.

CRQ 2: How have threats to immigrant agricultural workers' safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity been documented in literature?

When I began addressing this question, I expected to find evidence for clear categories of threat described in the literature. However, there are considerable intersections among threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. Meaning, a threat to personal safety can also

mean a threat to economic well-being or cultural identity, either directly, or as a potential consequence of the threat. I have identified what I consider the most significant and illustrative threats indicated by the literature, including deportation and violence, economic stability, and erasure, which correspond to the threat narrative categories of safety, economic well-being and cultural identity, respectively. These categories of threats, however, are intimately interconnected.

Safety

The safety aspect of the threat narrative about immigrants speaks to fear that migrants commit crimes or support terrorism (Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021), thereby casting immigrants as threats to personal safety and national security. However, the literature reveals that undocumented workers are vulnerable to threats to their own safety, especially through the ongoing threat of deportation.

The threat of deportation is one of the most significant threat imposed on immigrant farmworkers as far as safety, but there are also implications relative to economic well-being which will be explored in the following section. It is illustrative of the power differential between workers, employers, and local communities who are suspicious or resentful of the workers' presence. Farm and agricultural workers tend to live and work in primarily white and rural spaces and experience what Mares (2019) describes as the "regime of deportability." This is regime characterized by a constant conflict of "hyper/visibilities and hyper/invisibilities" where undocumented workers are forced out of the shadows through spectacles like police/immigration enforcement raids. They are then forced back into the shadows by "entrenching notions of illegality and practices of surveillance and policeability (Mares 2019, 31) while society continues to depend on the labor undocumented immigrant workers provide. More simply put, this regime

renders undocumented workers fearful of public spaces because they are so readily identified as "other" (Holmes, 2013, Mares, 2019, Sbicca et al. 2020).

The regime of deportability is persistent, affecting workers by, inflecting many aspects of daily life with a sense of fear for safety. Holmes (2013) elaborates on the persistent presence of fear for safety that undocumented immigrants experience when he describes "Driving while Brown." He explains how "any mistake with their [farmworkers] cars or driving could become an excuse for pulling them over, which, in turn, could lead to deportation" (Holmes 2013, 37). Detainment or deportation would obviously lead to a loss of income as well as separation from family and community and the possibility of returning to a country or region that is politically and economically unstable or violent.

Holmes further explains that this type of behavior breeds distrust in law enforcement. Sbicca et al. (2020) agrees, describing the issue of sexual violence, which is a clear threat to the personal safety of female farmworkers: "Given the state's enforcement preference of deportation-focused immigrant law over protecting women from sexual violence, farmworkers rightfully view the state with suspicion, while co-workers and employers are held unaccountable" (266). Gray (2014) also recognizes the intersection of farmworkers' vulnerability and distrust of law enforcement when she describes how farmworkers "found themselves under suspicion and finger printed – in essence, criminalized – even though they were reporting being victims of a crime" (51). This is an obvious example of racial profiling – representative of being an "other" in a predominately white space.

The "regime of deportability" is a constant threat to undocumented workers, but it can be exacerbated during economic downturns. This is especially relevant because rural areas often have limited job opportunities, "'With the current state of the economy and people without jobs,

they are looking at my guys – some are driving decent cars and they are living for free and pulling a decent wage – and they are making comments to me'…But it might take only one angry local to bring down an immigration raid" (Gray 2014, 92). This type of retaliatory action is particularly cruel, because overwhelmingly, undocumented agricultural workers accept jobs and wages for positions that would otherwise go unfulfilled.

The regime of deportability is a constant threat in public, but undocumented agricultural workers also often have their physical safety threatened by private employers as a tactic to keep workers compliant, and therefore more exploitable. As described in Chapter Two, there is a long history of farmworker intimidation. Mitchell (1996) describes how Mexican laborers were perceived and treated as labor during World War II, "We want Mexicans because we can treat them as we cannot treat any other living men…We can control them at night behind bolted gates, within a stockade eight feet high, surmounted by barbed wire…We make them work under armed guards in the fields" (D. Mitchell 1996, 88). This is a clear example of "othering" and dehumanizing behavior to justify imposing the threat of violence on farmworkers. Conditions for many have not improved. Gray (2014) describes how in 2002, four New York farmworkers escaped locked barracks where thirty workers were being held at gunpoint and threatened with violence if they complained (43). She cites additional similar instances and explains that while these occurrences are rare, they serve as a "lesson" to other farmworkers. The threat of violence and personal safety, whether actual or perceived, is an ongoing method used to control workers. Gray describes how both "truths and half-truths fed into workers perception about how they might be treated themselves and contributed to their reluctance to challenge their employers" (43). Academic literature has documented different types of threats to safety imposed upon workers. The regime of deportability subjects workers to public scrutiny; it's omnipresent,

affecting many aspects of everyday life. The fear of being othered in public spaces also leads to a fear of law enforcement which means that workers will not seek assistance when they are victimized. Additionally, economic downturns exacerbate workers' vulnerability to visibility and the threat of deportation. Lastly, private employers use the threat of violence as a method to make workers more compliant, and therefore exploitable. These types of employment-related threats to farmworker safety can also carry over to economic well-being.

Economic well-being

The threat to economic well-being, like personal safety, is rooted in insecurity. This insecurity is based on the fear of job loss, economic instability, and lack of access to resources, including to funding for services like education and healthcare (Banulescu-Bogdan et al. 2021). There are many illustrative examples of historical and present-day evidence that indicate how threats to economic well-being are imposed on immigrant agricultural laborers.

As explained in Chapter Two, long-standing policies have kept agricultural labor vulnerable and prevented socioeconomic upward mobility. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 excluded agricultural workers from employment protections should they wish to organize or join a union. This restriction has been further compounded by a recent decision by the Supreme Court of the United States that found allowing union organizers to approach agricultural labor on an employers' property violated the constitutional right of the taxpayer (Liptak 2021). The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 denied farmworkers a basic standard of minimum wage and overtime pay. The consequences of this legislation include poverty wages for workers, many of whom earn $15,999 - $17,499 per year (Bon Appetit 2011). Additionally, because current federal policies do not require an hourly rate, many states allow producers to pay by weight or volume picked. This can lead to false reporting on weight cards by checkers, and in

some cases, if farmworkers pick less than the required minimum, they can be fired (Holmes 2013). The lack of federally-mandated wages also leaves workers vulnerable to unpredictable and late pay. This can have a cascading effect on a worker's ability to secure or pay for housing, and it leaves them vulnerable to food insecurity if they are unable to access and purchase basic needs on a regular basis.

The overall lack of worker protections in agriculture keep both documented and undocumented farmworkers vulnerable and extends to the nature of their relationship with their employer. Undocumented workers do not have a contract with their employer – they can be terminated at any time. Sbicca et al. (2020) explains that workers with H-2A visas as also vulnerable; their visas are contingent upon their sponsorhip by their employer. This means that if the worker is terminated before the contract is up, the worker must return to their home country immediately; they do not have the opportunity to find another employer. Therefore, both documented and undocumented workers are under a constant threat of economic instability due to job loss and exploitation with no recourse.

Threats to economic stability are not limited to unpredictable employment and low wages, but also include being charged unfairly for goods and services. Holmes (2013) describes indigenous Oaxacans, Triqui, receiving less food than what they had ordered and paid for. They were reluctant to pursue having the order corrected, which again speaks to the vulnerability of the "regime of deportability." Holmes goes on to describe Triqui coworkers being charged incorrectly for medical services or medications, or being given incorrect medicines. This is not only grossly irresponsible, but it is also representative of othering and a present-day example of the willingness and desire to diminish the basic human value of another. It is reminiscent of Mitchell's (1996) example of mistreating Mexican laborers, "We can treat them as we cannot

treat other men" (88). This type of medical irresponsibility is an example of the intersection of the safety and economic well-being threats imposed on workers. The lack of access to care, or in this case, poor medical care, is a threat to a workers' overall safety. Medical malpractice could also have long-term health consequences, which can affect any semblance of economic stability the workers may have by limiting future opportunities for work.

The literature provided examples that are illustrative of threats to workers' economic well-being including unpredictable employment, low wages, and being charged unfairly for goods and services. Workers are denied economic and social stability because of unpredictable employment. This impacts their ability to meet basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. This is compounded by low wages – workers often do not earn enough to meet basic needs, and if they are undocumented, they are ineligible for social entitlement programs that could improve their quality of life. Lastly, workers are subject to exploitation by being charged unfairly for good and services like food and medical care.

Cultural identity

The cultural aspect of the threat narrative includes fear of losing national or cultural identity which includes elements like language, religion, or traditions. Again, the "regime of deportability" is especially illustrative of undocumented workers' vulnerability of being readily recognized as "other" in predominately white spaces. The threat of deportation pushes farmworkers further into the shadows, isolated from friends and family, as well as the local community.

Gray (2014) provides some historical context for the isolation and diminished value of agricultural labor. She explains that as the need for agricultural labor became more seasonal and therefore transient, the labor camp model was established and "altered the relationship between

workers and farmers by sealing their spatial polarization" (31). By segregating workers, they were distanced from local communities and the "labor camp firmly demarcated the farmworker job category from status held by employers and other locals" (31). This is another clear example of othering and diminishing the value of farmworkers' labor. The "regime of deportability" forces workers into cultural isolation as a means of self-preservation because they are so easily recognized in rural, predominately white spaces.

Threats to cultural identity and isolation facilitate farmworkers' exploitation and threats to their economic stability. Mares (2019) explains that the implications of this type of isolation during her research presentation at the University of Vermont when a student asked, "Wait, what are you going to do in Vermont? There's no Mexicans in Vermont!" (38). This speaks not only to the threat to cultural identity, the true lack of awareness of a group's existence, but also as the threat to economic well-being – the lack of awareness of the economic impact workers have on local economies. Mares (2019) explains that despite farmworkers invisible labor to "keep the state's agricultural economy afloat" (6), because they are "othered," they are unable to integrate into local communities, their role as community members is diminished, valued as less than (12). This is consistent with Gray's (2014) explanation of how and why farm labor was isolated and othered during the early 20th century.

The intersection of the threat to economic well-being and cultural identity is also present in agricultural workers' efforts to meet basic needs, like food. The regime of deportability keeps farmworkers isolated at their farms, which leads to a dependence on their employers to provide basic necessities. Communication with employers and others is often a problem that affects not only the ability to communicate personal preferences and choices, but also negotiating costs for necessities and access to culturally appropriate foods (Mares 2019). As mentioned earlier, low

and inconsistent wages also contribute to the constant threat of food insecurity among a population that does not have access to entitlement programs like SNAP.

The literature has documented threats to cultural identity imposed on immigrant agricultural labor. The "regime of deportability" keeps workers isolated at their farms which contributes to an overall lack of awareness of their very existence. This contributes to their overall isolation, from friends and family, as well as preventing them from building relationships within their community. This isolation results in their diminished value as contributors to the local economies and as a member of the community because they are seen as "other." Lastly, worker isolation inhibits their ability to meet basic needs which leads to the constant threat of food insecurity. Undocumented workers are especially vulnerable to food insecurity because they are ineligible for entitlement programs.

Analysis

Academic literature has clearly documented threats imposed upon immigrant agricultural workers in all three threat categories. Looking across the categories, we can see that the threats function to facilitate exploitation – politics and policies and the resulting social consequences allow for the reproduction of labor exploitation while denying workers any rights or basic protections.

Immigrant agricultural workers, specifically the undocumented, are particularly vulnerable to threats to their safety. There is a long history of threatening and intimidating agricultural workers to force compliance and exploitability, and that culture continues today. The "regime of deportation" forces workers to remain in the shadows, vulnerable to mistreatment by their employers and unable or unwilling to seek assistance or built community connections because of their need to avoid detection and possible detainment or deportation. Deportation

could result in separation from friends and family as well as the risk of returning to a politically or economically unstable country or region. Further, detainment can result in lost wages or employment which can contribute to economic instability which is an example of the intersection of the different threat categories.

Immigrant agricultural workers are essential to the success of state and local economies and yet their economic well-being is under constant threat from their employers and surrounding communities. Agricultural work is often considered "unskilled labor," but it is difficult and often dangerous work for which workers are poorly compensated. Further, workers experience workplace abuses like late or inconsistent payments or wage theft. The literature also detailed instances of workers being overcharged for good and services which is particularly abhorrent given how little agricultural workers earn. Their undocumented status prevents them from pursuing corrective action because of the threat of deportation or violence. This again is indicative of the intersection the different categories of threat used to continue to exploit this labor force.

The threat of loss of cultural identity is best illustrated by erasure for the purposes of isolation and the development of a stuck, compliant workforce. The "regime of deportation" keeps agricultural labor living and working in the shadows which subjects workers to continued exploitation and mistreatment as well as isolation from local communities. The history of disassociating farm labor from local communities is long and workers suffer from being seen as both "other" and invisible. Regardless of the financial impact workers contribute to local economies, as well as their value as a human being, communities disregard their value leaving them vulnerable to the threat of cultural identity.

Thus, taken together, we can see how immigrant agricultural workers face threats in all three categories. They are related to their employment, directly and indirectly, which brings benefits to many and through which they are exploited. We hire laborers for agricultural jobs that would often otherwise go unfulfilled and facilitate their exploitation by threatening them with deportation, violence, financial insecurity, and isolation. All the while we make people feel threatened by and fearful of them – this, incidentally, is also supported by their isolation. As described in Chapter One, fear can keep us isolated in a situational purgatory, unwilling or unable to make decisions that can change circumstances. The threats documented against agricultural workers have certainly had that effect. Finally, by continuing to "other" and isolate workers through the regime of deportation, their exploitation will continue.

The following section discusses my contributions to the social problem of agricultural labor exploitation.

Contribution

In this section I will discuss the contribution of my research findings to better understanding and challenging narratives that reproduce the exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers. I was not terribly surprised by the results of the first constitutive research question, which indicated that thought leaders invoked immigrants and positioned them as threats, specifically threats to the economic well-being and personal safety and national security of the United States. The historical research used for the background provided in Chapter Two foreshadowed how politics and policy would affect workers today and these continue to be visible in political narratives. Learning about the history of agricultural labor – how we shifted from the model when farmhands lived with a farmer and his family to the seasonal, migratory

"other" provided the context needed to better understand the commodification of agricultural production and the labor required to support the system.

While research findings documented narratives that position immigrant laborers as threats, the Introduction to this Capstone discussed how many popular narratives around the food system omit the exploitation and vulnerabilities of the immigrant agricultural worker. Political leadership have crafted narratives that overwhelmingly ignore the exploitation and vulnerabilities of immigrant agricultural workers while omitting significant details that would otherwise provide a much more comprehensive perspective. While immigration is a complicated issue, narratives from political speech about immigration very clearly contribute to the reproduction of labor exploitation among immigrant agricultural workers through othering and contributing to their invisibility.

Othering immigrant laborers and positioning them as threats in narratives have material consequences based in labor exploitation. As explained in Chapter Two, the U.S. has established domestic and international policies that make cheap labor attractive to both producers and consumers. The U.S. government does not offer undocumented workers a reasonable path to legal and protected status. Instead, they are cast as "other" and vilified by political leaders who complain about the costs involved with immigration and insist that these workers "wait their turn" for legal documented status. While they wait, workers continue to live and labor in the shadows, earning poverty wages, and subjected to threats, mistreatment and abuse. They are also denied the benefits of mutual aid through organized labor because of policies that were written to provide a plentiful, cheap, and exploitable labor force.

This exploitation is also facilitated by immigrant laborers' invisibility, which has also been a recurring theme for this Capstone research. As I mentioned in the Introduction, food

production labor is largely invisible to the general public. Moreover, much of the social system infrastructure that supports modern society is done by invisible labor. However, unlike other social systems, we all participate in the food system because we all eat. The theme of invisibility was profoundly present in the second constitutive research question through the "regime of deportation." Workers are isolated from local communities, friends, and family because they are recognizable in predominately white, rural spaces. This again keeps them classified as "other" when workers do venture into public spaces. Further, their contributions to the success of state and local economies are consistently overlooked, narratives only include the expenses related to undocumented immigration. These workers should not be valued just because of their economic contributions to local economies. Instead, it is important to note the gap in the narratives about this labor force, both from thought leaders and the general public who are, instead, conditioned to fear and resent the "other."

Personal safety, national security, and economic well-being are never guaranteed. We can certainly mitigate risks, but we can never eliminate threats entirely. However, narratives in political speech that position undocumented immigrants, including agricultural workers, as risks is misguided. The literature analyzed for the second constitutive research question clearly shows that undocumented workers are far more vulnerable to risks to their personal safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity than the general public.

The narratives in political speech are designed to connect and persuade. I have illustrated how thought leaders use narratives, specifically threat narratives, to influence the public, politics, and policy. The academic literature documents a far more comprehensive view of the threats imposed upon agricultural workers. Having examined this unbalanced power differential between elected officials and undocumented workers, I now have a better understanding of how

incomplete or misrepresented narratives can have a lasting effect on vulnerable populations. Thought leaders use the threat narrative to convince the public that we are vulnerable, but instead, they neglect, and contribute to the reproduction of labor exploitation of the most vulnerable among us.

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This chapter presented the constitutive research questions, data, and analysis to address the social problem of immigrant agricultural labor exploitation and the Overall Research Question of how immigrant agricultural workers are positioned as and subject to threats to safety, economic well-being, and cultural identity. Thought leaders do position immigrant agricultural workers as threats, specifically as threats to personal safety, national security, and economic well-being. The literature provided many instances of the threats imposed on immigrant agricultural workers across the threat categories. Undocumented workers are trapped in a dangerous cycle; their status makes them vulnerable to exploitation, but they are unable or unwilling to seek assistance due to status which makes them vulnerable to detainment or deportation. Workers are far more vulnerable to threats than U.S. nationals, however, the constructed narrative casts workers as the "other" and contributes to their exploitation because they are considered less than. The following chapter provides a summary of this Capstone work and a reflection on social justice and social problems.

Five—Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to review this Capstone research's contribution to social justice in the food system and society. I will summarize and reflect on what I have learned about social justice, social problems, and the role of inquiry in addressing social justice problems in food systems and society.

This research presented two different perspectives on the immigrant agricultural workers who are fundamental to the functionality of our current food system. The first was narratives from political speech. Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and each other about the world. For this research, narratives were used to influence politics and policy. Thought leaders othered and blamed undocumented immigrants for social ills rather than acknowledging the systemic causes for social failures while positioning them as threats. Narratives are also often incomplete, leading us to fill in those gaps with our own assumptions and biases. The second question presented documented instances of threats imposed on immigrant agricultural workers. This research was illustrative, but the examples presented in this research clearly described the exploitation workers endure.

Narratives and our values and belief systems are influenced by our own lived experiences. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, U.S. culture is one that values individualism and self-reliance (L. Mitchell 2014); and we subscribe to the meritocracy myth: that if we just work hard enough, we will achieve success. What is absent from both of these narratives is that we never achieve success on our own. Those who define themselves as self-reliant or successful through hard work often have privileges that position them for success. Privileges like access to education or financial capital. Yes, they may work hard, but they are already many steps ahead of others because of those privileges.

This perspective clouds our ability to see the exploitation of others. We cannot expect someone to upset an exploitive situation if we deny them the resources and tools to do so. The labor force that is fundamental to the success of our food system is largely invisible, grossly mistreated, and denied the tools to achieve socioeconomic stability or mobility, regardless of how hard, or how much, they work. Workers should have, at the very least, the right to report mistreatment without the fear of criminal penalties like detainment or deportation. This is one reason why critical inquiry is so important.

Critical inquiry provides scholars the tools to approach social problems with a clear commitment to social justice. Scholars have their own narratives and biases – I know that I certainly do. My personal narrative and perspective clashes with the popular "love your farmer" bumper sticker narrative. But, even something as simple as a bumper sticker speaks to the invisibility of the undocumented immigrant farmworker which allows their exploitation to continue.

The perception of the importance of labor very much depends on where you fall on the socioeconomic spectrum. Much of the fundamental labor that supports the infrastructure for our daily life is invisible. We are often too distracted by the onslaught of other demands or distractions of life to notice the labor required to make modern society to function, which results in the reproduction of structural oppression. We often live and move at the pace of 24-hour news cycle with sound bites, clickbait and misinformation. We barely have time to fully process information before we are bombarded with the next news report. This type of information feeds our individual narratives, because it's often *just enough* information to lend validity to a story, but not enough to potentially disrupt, or change, the narrative.

I had my own narratives about the food system when I started the Food Systems and Society program, especially about labor issues. None of my narratives were false, but they were incomplete. My narratives lacked historical context – I could not answer the "how did we get here" question. My desire to have a foundational understanding of the "why" to many social problems has directed my research approach to be more of a student of history. It has certainly influenced my approach to critical inquiry by looking for the reasons why our systemic issues are the way they are. It is easy for social justice advocates to address social problems as racist or classist, because they are, but it is my opinion that we need a broader and more dynamic understanding of history to undo and redress the politics and policies that allow the reproduction of exploitation for all workers.

As I move toward completing the Food Systems and Society program, it is now my responsibility to find ways to communicate the need to question and disrupt the narratives that contribute to the exploitation and oppression of others. This is possible, but as scholars, we must accept that our work will contribute to the work of those who came before us and be part of the work that scholars and advocates continue in the future.

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