Working Title for Manuscript:
The Other Border: Sustaining Farmworkers in Vermont’s Dairy Industry
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Manuscript Structure:
The final manuscript will have the following estimated word counts: Introduction (10,000); Chapter 1 (15,000); Chapter 2 (15,000); Chapter 3 (15,000); Chapter 4 (15,000); Chapter 5 (15,000); Conclusion (8,000). The manuscript will include approximately 10-12 black and white images, including maps, landscape photographs, and de-identified photographs of farmworkers and their gardens.

Manuscript Summary:
The Other Border: Sustaining Farmworkers in Vermont’s Dairy Industry explores the intersections of structural vulnerability, food insecurity, and everyday resilience in the lives of migrant farmworkers in the northeastern borderlands of the United States. It presents a dynamic ethnographic portrait of the Latino/a farmworkers who labor in Vermont’s dairy industry, illuminating the complex and resilient ways these workers sustain themselves and their families as they simultaneously uphold the state’s agricultural economy. In presenting this portrait, The Other Border examines how the broader movements for food justice and labor rights play out in an agricultural sector where systemic inequality is continually reproduced by the demands of an industrialized food system and the contradictions of racialized and misaligned agriculture and immigration policies.

Despite the promise of year-round employment in the dairy industry, structural vulnerabilities and multiple forms of violence conspire to leave farmworkers never fully satiated, with their sustenance or their living conditions, even as their labor contributes to the livelihoods of farmers and the wellbeing of consumers across the food chain. At the same time, Vermont is widely seen as an agrarian utopia where socially responsible brands like Ben and Jerry’s and Cabot Cheese
have flourished and where the local food movement has taken firm hold of the consumer imaginary and purchasing power, as described by anthropologists Heather Paxson (2012) in her work on artisanal cheese and Amy Trubek (2009) in her work on terroir. Yet, migrant workers working and living in the shadow worlds to sustain the state’s industrialized food system continue to experience everyday marginalization, discrimination, and struggles in accessing their most basic needs.

Building upon more than four years of community-based ethnographic research, The Other Border engages the following interrelated questions: What are the social, political, and economic factors that bring Latino/a migrant dairy workers into the state of Vermont and what factors shape their lives while here? How do Latino/a migrant dairy workers access food and negotiate the reproductive labor associated with accessing and preparing foods within the household? How has the broader Vermont community responded to presence and the needs of this workforce amidst an ever-changing political and social climate? Key insights come from the author’s long-term collaboration with Huertas, an applied project that connects farmworkers with localized and fresh sources of culturally familiar food through building and maintaining kitchen gardens at the dairies where they live and work.

As the U.S. state with the highest dependence upon dairy production for agricultural revenue, Vermont has experienced significant shifts in the labor force that toils amidst the rolling hills and red barns that still dominate the pastoral working landscape. Once comprised primarily of small-scale family farms, the state’s dairy industry has been subjected to the same industrializing and consolidating pressures that pervade the U.S. food system as a whole. Over the past seventy-five years, Vermont has lost more than ninety percent of its dairy farms, yet continues to produce milk at record levels. Farms are now larger, with bigger herds, and are marked by more intensive milking technologies and schedules. The increased production of milk in the state, which comes at significant ecological and social costs, is directly facilitated by Latino/a farmworkers who migrate in search of employment and the chance at a better life for their present and future families.

Often characterized as a “new” or “nontraditional” destination for Latino/a migration, Vermont has seen a steady increase in the number of migrant farmworkers from Mexico and other regions of Latin America since the late 1990s. Of the estimated 1200-1500 Latino/a migrant dairy workers in the state, the vast majority are undocumented men coming from central and southern Mexico. As one of the whitest states in the nation, these demographic changes have not gone unnoticed, particularly given the proximity of many dairy farms to the U.S.-Canada border and the active presence of immigration enforcement in these rural areas. Significant disparities in access to basic needs are compounded by the anxieties and fears that farmworkers experience while working and living within the northern borderlands. In this region, processes of surveillance and policing parallel those of the U.S-Mexico border, though in distinct and often
contradictory ways. Through connecting and extending the fields of border, migration, and food studies, *The Other Border* interrogates the complex relationships between geopolitical spaces, social practices, and cultural identities as they manifest in this unique and underexamined place.

To date, very little has been published about the experiences and perspectives of Latino/a workers in the dairy industry, irrespective of region. Understanding the social, political, and economic dynamics that bring Latino/a workers into the state of Vermont, and those that shape their living and working conditions once here, is essential given that they sustain the cornerstone of an agricultural economy so marked by its proximity to an international border and particular racialized histories. Through examining the active resistance to and negotiation of the inequalities that persist in Vermont’s dairy industry, *The Other Border* also highlights how new generative possibilities for building food and labor justice are emerging, with the potential to reshape both the broader movements for justice and the lives of agricultural workers across the food chain.

**Chapter Summaries:**

**Introduction:**

This introductory chapter outlines the key claims, theoretical underpinnings, and community-based research methods that are explored in *The Other Border*. It opens the manuscript by tracing the main historical trends within Vermont’s agricultural history; providing a detailed political, cultural, and economic context for the increasing reliance upon migrant laborers from Latin America in sustaining the state’s dairy industry. In providing this history, this chapter highlights what is unique about the realities of farmworkers in the dairy sector in comparison to workers engaged in seasonal crop production. Despite these distinctions, dairy workers confront a contradiction that unites their struggles with the struggles of workers across the food chain, and it is this contradiction that animates this book: Food and farmworkers in the United States struggle with disproportionate rates of hunger and food insecurity, even as their labor provides for the food security of others.

A crucial factor that shapes the daily lives of farmworkers and their historical and current role in the state’s agricultural sector is Vermont’s status as a northern border state -- particularly as our national borders have become sites of new forms of racialized surveillance, exclusion, and violence. This introduction engages with these dynamics to problematize the intellectual hegemony of the border studies genre, which has been predominately oriented towards the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. This extends the book’s scope beyond Vermont to argue for a more complex and nuanced understanding of how the maintenance and navigation of our nation’s borders is shaped by geographic specificities, the uneven movement of capital and workers, and the impacts of state and federal policies on food systems and patterns of migration.
Chapter One: Vulnerability and Violence in the Northern Borderlands

As a border state with an active presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel, many of the same fears, anxieties, and dangers that are endemic to the U.S.-Mexico border are reproduced in the state of Vermont. This has significant consequences for food security, diet-related health, and the overall wellbeing of migrant workers in the dairy industry. In the post-911 era, scholars point to the ways that the U.S.-Canada border has become increasingly “Mexicanized” amidst concerns of terrorism and lax surveillance (Andreas 2005). While the dangers and risks of the U.S. northern and southern borderlands are distinct in how they impact those who transgress and reside within them, significant and persistent patterns of structural vulnerability and violence pervade the everyday lives of Latino/a migrant workers in Vermont. Structural vulnerability, as defined by anthropologists, is both a process through which the “…vulnerability of an individual is produced by his or her location in a hierarchical social order and its diverse networks of power relationships and effects” and an analytical stance that examines “…the forces that constrain decision-making, frame choices, and limit life options” (Quesada et. al. 2011). For Vermont’s farmworkers, structural vulnerability is produced by and serves to reproduce the ongoing fear and anxieties of living and working in a rural landscape where one is so visibly out of place. This first chapter engages with and extends the concept of structural vulnerability to lay the groundwork for the subsequent ethnographic analysis of how Latino/a migrant workers sustain themselves and how these efforts are constrained by broader cultural, political, and economic forces.

Anthropologists, mostly notably Seth Holmes (2013), have offered crucial insights into the lives of farmworkers during and after the process of migration, focusing mostly upon the wellbeing and health of those employed in seasonal agricultural production in states with a long history of Latino/a migration. Together, these studies highlight the structural vulnerabilities that leave Latino/a migrant workers at risk for health disparities and decreased life chances (Figueroa-Sanchez 2013, Holmes 2011 and 2013, Kearney and Nagengast 1989, Palerm 2002, Quesada et. al. 2011). Yet, scholars have not explored the theoretical intersection of food insecurity and structural vulnerability within farmworker populations in any region in the United States, even though it has proven to be a fruitful line of theoretical inquiry in studies of food insecurity within non-farmworker communities and families (Carney 2015). This chapter advances the scholarship on structural vulnerability and food security through bringing these concepts together in an examination of the multiple and often contradictory ways they manifest within a border region where migration from Latin America is a relatively new phenomenon. In doing so, this chapter also moves the fields of Latino/a studies and border studies into a new geographic and social space that has to date received very little scholarly attention. The state of Vermont and its iconic working landscape are critically examined in this chapter as I tease apart the racialized histories and the social and political policies that make dairy work an attractive option for recent migrants even as these histories and policies constrain their full integration into and access to the benefits of Vermont rural life.
Chapter Two: More Than Money: Extending the Meanings and Methodologies of Farmworker Food Security

This chapter examines household food security practices among Latino/a dairy workers in Vermont, revealing how the standardized questionnaires developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to examine and quantify food security at the household level are inadequate for fully understanding the complexities of food access for migrant households. For migrant workers and their families who seek to sustain culturally meaningful foodways from home, the realities of living and working in Vermont’s rural economy present significant challenges to achieving food security on their own terms. In this chapter, I argue that food security is itself an inadequate and overly simplistic concept to fully encompass the discourses and practices that migrant workers engage as they work to feed their families, who more often than not, reside on both sides of the border. In making the case for the promise of publically-engaged ethnographic research, this chapter shows how migration to the United States is typically predicated upon food insecurities created by historical patterns of poverty and dispossession in Latin America.

This chapter simultaneously presents and problematizes food security data collected through administering the USDA Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) with 100 Latino/a farmworkers in Vermont. Because the HFSSM is designed as a rapid assessment of food security at the household level, it inherently narrows the lived experience of food access to a series of pre-determined and decontextualized choices and narrow categories. This chapter therefore pairs quantitative food security data with demographic data and farmworker narratives about their efforts to feed their families, in order to illuminate the social, cultural, and political contexts in which migrant farmworkers access and prepare food. For workers who are supporting household economies on both sides of the border, the concept of “household” specifically demands a deeper inquiry. Although recent studies have examined the physical and mental health of Latino/a migrant workers in the state of Vermont (Baker and Chappelle 2012, Wolcott-MacCausland 2014), prior to this study there was no reliable data on the incidence of food insecurity among Vermont’s migrant dairy workers. This chapter compares the Vermont case with studies of farmworker food security in more traditional destinations of migration to illuminate the unique set of constraints and opportunities that the state’s farmworker community faces in accessing, sharing, and preparing food (Borre et.al. 2010, Kresge and Eastman 2010).

Chapter Three: Cultivating Food Sovereignty Where There Are Few Choices

This chapter picks up on the previous critique of food security to examine the potential for food sovereignty for Vermont’s farmworkers who participate in Huertas, a kitchen gardening project housed within University of Vermont Extension’s Bridges to Health Program (huerta is Spanish for kitchen garden). With a commitment to community-based research, the author has collaboratively developed and supervised this project since 2011. Since the project’s inception,
Huertas has worked on nearly 50 of Vermont’s dairy farms with families and individuals from both rural and urban regions of Mexico and Guatemala, prioritizing the cultivation of culturally familiar varieties of herbs, vegetables, and fruits. As the project has expanded, it has become increasingly guided by and committed to a food sovereignty framework with its bottom-up perspective that demands a deeper conversation of rights, control, and choice (Mares et.al. Forthcoming). This chapter engages this framework to illuminate the resilience and agency that Huertas participants cultivate alongside the plants that hold deep cultural and nutritional meaning for them. Central to this chapter are farmworker stories of food and recipes from their home communities and their subsequent efforts to sustain these foodways through cultivating, harvesting, and cooking meals from their gardens in Vermont. In sharing these stories, this chapter pays particular attention to the ways that these practices are gendered, extending an important line of anthropological inquiry into the importance of ensuring not only the right to food, but the right to feed others (Page-Reeves 2014, Van Esterik 1999).

In most academic and activist literature, food sovereignty has been primarily conceptualized as an all-encompassing movement with the end goal of rebuilding locally controlled and oriented food systems, rather than a set of everyday practices and choices that individuals and families make over the food that sustains them. This chapter builds upon ethnographic data to argue that food sovereignty can and should operate at both levels, and that the household (or garden) is a crucial space where food sovereignty might emerge. Through presenting and weaving together narratives from Huertas gardeners, this chapter illuminates the glimmers of food sovereignty that sustain gardeners as they work and live in an agricultural economy where they are separated both from the products of their labor and the food and food-based practices in their countries of origin. While these gardens are significant in rebuilding some sense of place and autonomy, our efforts are necessarily limited by constraints of a short growing season, demanding work schedules, and the deeper structural vulnerabilities these workers face.

Chapter Four: They Are Out, They Are Looking: Providing Goods and Services Under Surveillance
A key distinction between Vermont’s relatively recent experience with migration from Latin America and states with longer histories is manifest in the patchwork of state and federal agencies, community-based organizations, and individual actors who provide goods and services to the migrant community. This chapter draws upon key stakeholder interviews and ethnographic fieldwork to present the perspectives of those who, despite significant challenges, provide food and other basic needs to the migrant farmworker community. These stakeholders include health providers, employers who provide or shop for food, mobile markets that bring food directly to dairy farms, providers of state and federal food entitlements, and community organizers active within the farmworker community. For some, their efforts are part of a broader critique of the violence perpetuated against immigrant communities, while for others, their efforts are informed by the profit motive, seeing migrant workers primarily as an underserved client base or as merely
a work force in need of continued fuel. In presenting these perspectives, this chapter reinforces a broader claim that food security and access must be understood in a comprehensive and holistic manner that also accounts for the provisioning of food and the structural constraints that shape this provisioning.

As for the workers themselves, service providers confront stress and anxiety about surveillance from border patrol as they move around the rural landscape, seeking to draw as little attention as possible to the presence of undocumented farmworkers. Their ability to maintain relationships with farmworkers and visit their homes and places of work depends upon bonds of trust and respect not only with these workers, but with farm managers and owners. In sharing the experiences of service providers and the challenges they face, this chapter also works to disentangle the complex web of local, state, and federal policies that govern the distribution of food entitlements and how both the barriers and access to political citizenship are foregrounded in the distribution of these entitlements. In doing so, this chapter focuses in on the variances that exist between households comprised entirely of foreign-born individuals and those with U.S.-born children given the different food-related entitlements available to these individuals.

**Chapter Five: Resilience and Resistance in the Movement for Just Food and Work**

Over the last twenty years, the international food movement has increasingly picked up steam and has brought with it significant changes in how food is grown, distributed, and consumed around the world. Yet, we must recognize that the food movement is not a monolithic force, and different arms of the movement hold different priorities and demands for change (Mares and Alkon 2011). While some food activists are comfortable with reform-oriented actions, other approaches call for a complete and revolutionary change to our food system, or a dismantling of the “corporate food regime” (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). This chapter situates the lives of farmworkers and recent farmworker organizing in the state of Vermont within these demands for change, responding to calls for scholars of the food movement to foreground issues of labor inequality and worker justice. The accomplishments of food and labor activists in Vermont have been enabled by the state’s progressive leanings that are in sharp contrast to the political and cultural realities of the U.S.-Mexico border. In this way, *The Other Border* is not only a place where inequalities are sustained, but it also a space where possibilities for justice are emerging.

Within the state of Vermont, farmworker-led organizing efforts have successfully challenged racial profiling and have secured access to drivers’ privilege cards for any state resident, regardless of citizenship status. More recently, the farmworker-led organization Migrant Justice has developed the “Milk with Dignity” campaign to pressure large companies like Ben and Jerry’s to agree to a worker-driven social responsibility program, taking inspiration from the innovative organizing strategies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida. These efforts, combined, have raised the visibility of both the deplorable conditions in which many Vermont farmworkers work and live, and the resiliency that these same workers exhibit as they strive for
equity and basic human rights. In tracing these state-level victories and calls for change, this chapter argues that for any movement for just food to fully succeed, it must work for equity at the household level, within the workplace, and within the political and social institutions that give shape to our daily lives.

**Conclusion:**
In the conclusion, I pull together the different threads of the book to rearticulate the intersections between structural vulnerability, food security, and resilience; underscoring how these themes animate and shape the lives of migrant dairy workers alongside *The Other Border*. I emphasize the point that food security and sovereignty is both a critical topic of both study and advocacy given the current political and economic inequalities that food and farmworkers face, and also an analytical lens that allows us to examine and connect intimate embodied practices with global political-economic structures. Here, I make the case for continued ethnographic inquiry into the multidimensional and ever-changing fields of food systems and migration and border studies. As a set of practices grounded in everyday life, ethnography is uniquely positioned to allow researchers to hold in constant tension everyday individual experience with broader social and cultural processes.

For Vermont’s farmworkers, sustenance is a constant source of concern -- in both the home and in the workplace. Whether it is a question of the cultural meanings of the food they eat, or the 70-hour workweeks they endure to sustain the production of the state’s most prized commodity, food and all that it represents figures heavily into their motivations for moving to and residing within the northern borderlands. Despite the very real inequalities that continue to dominate the lives of migrant workers, not only in Vermont’s dairy sector, but across the U.S. industrial food system, we also find ourselves in a moment where food is at the center of calls for change and greater equity. For this reason, *The Other Border* ends on a cautiously optimistic note, underscoring the transformative potential of food activism that takes the lead from -- and stands in solidarity with -- the priorities of those who feed the nation.
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