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ERA: WOMEN FARMWORKERS IN AMERICA**

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Remapping the Mexican Body in the AIDS Era: Women Farmworkers in California

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Introduction

Every society constructs its own notions of the body, including functions, attributes, structures, and the forms through which it should express, display, contain or perceive itself in a symbolic as well as material sense (Scheper-Hughes 1994; E. Martin 1995). Bodies are fabrications constructed in a specific historical context, and vary according to significant social markers such as gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic background, and degree of wealth or poverty, among others. Young (1995: 17) states, "The body has been invented. The way in which we sustain and move it is testament to our adherence to a given culture." The social body of Mexicana farmworkers is molded by dynamic mechanisms within a context which is transnational, and includes economic, geopolitical, esthetic, and cultural constraints.

In the politics of gender relations, both at the domestic and the international level, it is important to recognize how women negotiate and transgress expectations of the productive body, the sexualized body, and the undocumented body when Mexican women move to the US, and the implications for AIDS. The politics of transnationalism are embedded in the discourse and experiences that revolve around the bodies Mexican women who produce and reproduce the agricultural workforce in the United States, especially in California. Migrant Mexicanas have their own history--dreams, aspirations and denigrations--which are inscribed upon the body on the racialized body with potentially deadly consequences.

Based on ethnographic research, our findings document and contextualize the lives of Mexican women migrants, illustrating how socio-cultural constructions related to sexual

behavior and the body place them at risk for acquiring sexually transmitted infections. We will analyze how values, norms, and myths--based in gender and political inequalities--are inscribed or "mapped" upon the body of Mexican women in California, and how through migration they develop survival mechanisms and (re)construct traditional notions of the body.

Our interpretation builds on the framework by feminist scholars who argue that social reproduction-- of which sexuality is central--should be seen as local expressions of transnational inequalities (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Moore 1988; Martin 1995). In this framework, individuals imagine and enact cultural logics and social formations through personal struggle, generational mobility, social movements, and/or the contested claims of powerful religious and political ideologies, the state, or other sources of disempowerment. Migrant Mexican women's complex local knowledges and cultural practices regarding social reproduction, sexuality and the body reflect their lived experience in a regional political economy, and are choreographed by multiple, intertwined forces. Globalization sets in motion the migration of people, ideas, technologies, and fuels the processes by which popular culture and sexually transmitted infections across national borders. Patriarchal ideologies and practices create contradictory and ambiguous notions regarding the body and women's views of themselves as partakers of pleasure. The values established by the Catholic church shape the moral dimensions of sexuality and the meanings that regulate "accepted" sexual behavior.

In the context of economic restructuring in rural California which is linked to transnational migration from Mexico, production and social reproduction in particular sectors

such as agribusiness generates complex, contradictory, and ironic cultural changes occurring on either side of the U.S-Mexico border. Zavella (2000) finds that one way in which subjects imagine and negotiate these complex changes are through the perspective of "peripheral vision." Whether living in Mexico or the US, workers imagine their own work situations and their family lives in terms of how they compare with "*en el otro lado*"—across the U.S.-Mexico border. Peripheral vision originates in the power imbalance between Mexico and the United States, where working class Mexicans in the US and in Mexico experience social dislocation. Peripheral vision is a perspective which includes the frequent reminders that one's situation is unstable in comparison to others, that life fluctuates and is contingent upon the vagaries of the US and Mexican economies—and is experienced by those whose daily lives are organized by enterprises responding to global pressures. Whether residing in Mexico or in poor Mexican communities, Mexican women migrants are marginalized as gendered subjects.

Within the margins, these women live in "divided social worlds," similar to the prostitutes that Castañeda and her colleagues (1996) studied in Mexico City. Castañeda argues that as the sex workers remove their social "masks"—that is, provocative work costumes and heavy make-up designed to entice customers—they mark a social transformation from secret worker-warrior who have to negotiate everything from violence to sexually transmitted infections to a "normal" woman. Thus sex workers experience "social schizophrenia" as they move between the violent worlds of work and varied family contexts. In a similar fashion, the subjects with whom we work have settled in the US, survived the difficulties of crossing the

border, and struggle within socially violent work sites and negotiate changes in their daily lives in the US. Simultaneously, they are linked to kin and other social relationships in Mexico, and are mindful of the need to conform to "traditional" Mexican gendered expectations regarding sexuality and social relations in general.

This paper elaborates upon how women culturally map the body and construct notions of modesty and propriety on the one hand, and autonomy and human agency after migrating to California. We argue that beyond crossing the national border of US-Mexico integration, these women delineate clear notions of the body rife with gendered borders, and construct practices and meanings that situate themselves as social, cultural, economic and political subjects in relation to communities of origin and settlement. We begin with information which contextualizes our subjects within the migrant labor force that works in agribusiness.

The Mexicanization of Rural California

Mexican rural communities have become specialized reproducers of agricultural migrant workers who must rely on U.S.-earned wage remittances to ensure basic survival at home. Palerm and Urquiola argue that these two phenomena constitute a "binational system of agricultural production and reproduction," where the Mexican laborers who work in the US are reproduced in Mexico, and this relationship is so intertwined that neither link can be correctly understood without reference to the other (1993: 314). Because of the shared border and intertwined societies of Mexico and California, the economic and political crises in Mexico

which increase the demand for cheap labor in California, and the maturation of migratory social networks, the number and complexity of Mexicanos/as in California will increase.¹

Agricultural workers are one of the social groups that play an important role in the complex relations between the US and Mexico. In addition to Mexican workers' labor in US fields and the remittances they send to Mexico, they are an important part of redefining socio-demographic areas in rural California. The US government estimates that at end of the 1980s, approximately 40,000 documented workers crossed the border on a daily basis. Of those a large portion are involved in agribusiness. If one considers the number of people who crossed daily without documentation, the number would be substantially higher. According to official statistics, each year between 1990-1996, 230,000 undocumented Mexicans established residence in the US (INS 1998). Sixty three percent of adult farm workers are legally authorized to work in the US.²

The agricultural zones in California have been converted to places which general large amount of capital, thanks to the cheap labor of the migrant Mexican. Without the efforts of the Mexican farm workers, it would not be possible to maintain these multimillion dollar industries (calculated in 1990, at more than \$15 million). California sends the major part of the vegetables and fruit to the rest of the US (INS 1998). As payment for their work, the majority of farm workers (70 percent) receive annual salaries of less than \$7,500, which places they below the official poverty level. The benefits that farm workers receive in the form of health, education, and social services are minimal. In addition, some employers of agricultural businesses or labor

contractors do not report the workers' salaries. Consequently, if workers hurt themselves or reach retirement age, many of them cannot assert their rights to obtain certain benefits provided by Social Security, which makes another risk on their health status (Office of Minority Health Resource Center 1988).

With crop specialization and increased use of technology, the work season for farmworkers has lengthened. Thus Mexican farmworker communities are more internally heterogeneous, and now include long-term settlers and temporary migrants (Santa Cruz County 1993:10). The availability of long term jobs has enabled many migrants to establish a second home in California, in which they remain for longer periods of time, and they are increasingly settling permanently. These processes have fueled the "Mexicanization" of rural California, where immigrant farm workers have become the majority population and have changed the character of rural life in these communities (Palerm 1991). Moreover, increasingly Mexican migrants are originating in indigenous communities in Mexico, who often experience increased discrimination and exploitation not only by whites, but by Chicanos and mestizo Mexicanos (Zabin et al. 1993). Rural Latino communities have become places of concentrated and persistent poverty, dual societies with a few Anglos who make up the land owners, professionals and white collar workers and live in communities whose social relations--including networks, church affiliations, political differences, and ethnic expressions--often resemble those in Mexico from which the migrants came.

In the rural valleys where we conducted our research, farmworkers are over 90 percent Latino, predominantly male. Food processing's race and gender matrix is predominantly Mexican women (Bardacke 1994), and often is the next step up the job ladder. Farm worker households are large (6.8 members on average), with 2.6 workers per household, and 65 percent had seasonal/temporary farm jobs (Santa Cruz County Farmworker Housing Committee 1993). One study of Mexican farmworker found that a significant portion (13 percent) had "binational families"--they maintain occupied homes on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. These families provide an anchor for recent migrants and those who return seasonally and often continue to return to their communities in Mexico to visit kin and oversee farms or business there (Palerm 1991:89).³ These families often find that their kin networks in Mexico can provide greater emotional and social support than those in the United States, especially for women (Goodson-Lawes 1993). Thus Mexican farmworkers maintain key relationships in two social worlds: the predominantly Mexicano farmworker communities in rural California, and the communities they migrated from in Mexico.

Although they live and work in one of the richest nations, migrant farmworkers in the US have a Third World health status (Dever and Alan, 1991). Farmworkers have some of this nation's most severe social problems and are at greater risk for infectious diseases and chronic health conditions than the general population because of poverty, malnutrition, exposure to pesticides, and poor housing and hazardous working conditions.⁴ In addition, poverty, stress, mobility, and lack of recreational opportunities make farmworkers especially vulnerable to

substance abuse and prostitution, and there is a high incidence of sexually transmitted infections in camps of predominantly men (Migrant Health Newslines 1987). In addition to the above health concerns, women farm workers experience reproductive problems and an infant mortality rate that is 25 percent higher than the national average.⁵ However, within this constellation of poverty and poor health conditions, migrant women's vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections has been little studied.

Methodology

We will base our analysis on data generated through seven focus groups, with a total of 68 women of Mexican origin. The groups were selected in conjunction with community-based health clinics or organizations that work with migrant workers and their families. The focus groups were based on a dialogic process, designed to elicit women's views on the themes of changing gender expectations, sexuality, and women's vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections in the US. After the women agreed to some ground rules, we then showed a film about women's vulnerability to HIV in Mexico. The film served as a springboard for discussion of these issues for Mexican women in the US.⁶ We also conducted individual life histories with 12 women, all born in Mexico. All of the women we interviewed had low incomes, and were situated within the working class or the poor. Their ages ranged from 16 to 56. For the most part, these women migrated from rural areas, from the central western states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato, or, from farther south, Oaxaca. Most of them had not completed an

elementary education. Two women, however, were from Mexico City and held degrees from Mexican universities. The women migrated to the United States for a variety of reasons--because of labor displacement, seeking refuge from abusive male kin or lovers, or seeking adventure. They all migrated as adolescents or adults and were predominantly Spanish speakers. The women lived in predominantly Mexicano communities in north central California agricultural regions--the Pájaro Valley in Santa Cruz County, the Salinas Valley in Monterey County, and the San Joaquin Valley in Fresno County. All of these migrant subjects worked in agribusiness, on the farms, canneries, or packing sheds. They are subject to low wages and few benefits, dangerous working conditions, and the double day at home, largely responsible for most of the household labor as well as working for wages. Any names we use will be pseudonyms.⁷

This sample reflects globalizing processes particular to north central California. The settlement of Mexican migrant women began in large numbers after the end of the Bracero Program (in 1964) and increased dramatically beginning in the 1980s. Today in rural south Santa Cruz County, for example, 69 percent of the population is Latino, predominantly Mexican (Cole 1999). Mexican women's settlement in north central California is a product of a particular migration history from that is different from other regions which have longer settlement histories, such as Los Angeles, or *la frontera* (the US-Mexico border region).

Ethnographic Observations

These women were, for the most part, reared within a repressive cultural framework that is not unique but particular to Mexican culture. Centered in Catholicism, which instructs them to repress carnal pleasures unless within church-sanctified marriage, women are pressured to construe their yearnings in heterosexual, conventional terms. The salience of the virgin-whore cultural opposition can be seen in the ways in which these women subscribe to notions of silence about sexuality, and a virtual "cult of virginity" where modesty and their reputations as "*mujeres decentes*" are guarded.⁸ As an attempt to control their behavior, women were told that there was a whole array of signs that their bodies would display if they were to engage in transgressions, and mothers or other kin would be able to "read" those signs. As one woman explained:

Las mujeres que pierden la virginidad caminan diferente—con sus piernas separadas--y en sus rostros y en sus ojos se nota que 'saben más,' que ya tuvieron 'uso' de hombre. (When they lose their virginity, women walk different—with their legs separated--and in their faces and their eyes you can tell that they "know more," that they have been with a man.)"

Many women from rural areas were not allowed to walk alone in public in Mexico, even as adults, and many of them had little labor market experience prior to migration. Even after marriage, women were supposed to dress and move their bodies in ways that did not appear too provocative. Under these circumstances, then, the body is regarded like a map: it can be read by others regarding women's transgressions and is a source of betrayal if women do not control how they move or display themselves in public. Simultaneously, women's bodies are viewed as

uncontrollable--subject to the whims of passion or provoking reactions by men. Thus women's bodies were policed and their reputations guarded.⁹ Within the context of poverty and difficult access to health care, when women transgressed these norms, they sometimes neglected health problems related to sexuality unless it became dire.

Changes After Migration

After migration and settlement, these women experienced a dizzying array of changes in gender relations and expectations, and faced possibilities they had only imagined prior to migration. By living in the US, they must grapple with North American constructions of power based on their working class origins, and changing gender expectations where increasingly women are expected to juggle family and work roles. As women of color, their racialized bodies—typically with dark hair and skin and distinct phenotype—are sexualized. For Mexicana migrants, their sexuality, and fertility were a focus in the contestation of immigrants' use of health and social services in the Proposition 187 debates (Chavez 1996). In turn-of-the-century United States, the feminist, gay/lesbian, and Chicana/o social movements created new discourses about sexuality and Mexicanas' rights as racialized women.¹⁰ Thus upon migration, Mexicanas must negotiate gender and sexuality within a highly contested social and political context (Zavella forthcoming).

For those women who worked as farmworkers, during the peak of the harvest season the labor force was predominantly male, with male-female ratios of about 20 to 1. Further, the male

farm worker population is internally heterogeneous. It includes those older men who originally worked as Braceros, those who are younger and of more recent waves of migrants who have settled permanently, and those who sojourn annually, returning to Mexico after the harvest season. The sojourners include those who left behind wives, lovers and families in Mexico, and those who are single, looking to take a partner back to Mexico, or with whom to settle in California. In sum, if unmarried, these Mexican women migrant workers have a wide selection of men as potential lovers and/or spouses. Even if not looking for male partners, unlike their experiences in Mexico in highly gender segregated work sites, the farms of California put women and men farmworkers in close proximity.

One of the changes these women experienced related to their bodies, how they presented themselves in public. Women found that their work sites, particularly the fields and occasionally even the packing sheds, became sexualized social gauntlets. Any expression of availability, signified by wearing make up or “provocative” clothing, was noticed by the male coworkers and became the basis upon which they were invited on dates, propositioned for sexual encounters, or sexually harassed on-the-job. For example, the women reported that a particular farm was known to have a couch in the back of the shed and women were forced to have sex with a supervisor in exchange for a job.

Women farmworkers protected themselves from men’s advances by utilizing a variety of strategies, including covering their bodies. They must wear clothing to protect themselves from the weather and pesticides. Full work regalia includes heavy shirts, baggy pants, sturdy shoes,

heavy gloves, kerchiefs over their heads and mouths. In addition, despite the heat, they wore shirts tied round their waists to cover their buttocks and genitalia from male scrutiny, commentary, or touches when they bend over to work:

Nosotras trabajamos casi todo el tiempo agachadas, nuestros 'traseros' quedan en la cara del que viene atrás que muchas veces es un hombre. Pues la cantidad de mujeres en los campos es muy inferior a la de los hombres y no siempre podemos estar en una cuadrilla solo de mujeres. Es importante protegernos de ellos y de lo que las otras mujeres pueden pensar. Pues si uno anda enseñando su cuerpo, luego corre el chisme que lo que estamos buscando no es pizarcar la fresa, sino a los hombres. (We work almost all the time with our 'rumps' in the face of whoever comes from behind, which is usually a man. Well the number of women in the fields is much smaller than that of the men; we can't always be in a crew of only women. It's important to protect ourselves from them and from what the other women can think. If one walks around showing off her body, then the gossip will get around that we're not there to pick strawberries but to find men.)

Women learned that wearing cosmetics or colognes provoked unwanted responses. In this regard, María noted that “*No puedo ni siquiera usar rímel, porque me empiezan a molestrar, a querer tocarme y a armar un escándolo. (I can't even wear mascara, or they will bother me, want to touch me and start something.)*” Removing the layers of clothing is time-consuming, and given their short lunch breaks, sometimes women keep their cloistered attire: “*Muchas veces ni*

para comer nos destapamos. (Many times we don't even uncover ourselves to eat.)" In addition to protective clothing related to their jobs, then, women appeared publicly at work with few parts of their bodies exposed to protect themselves from men.

Working in such conditions was not always pleasant, and makes women feel as if they are participating in an alien environment (not dissimilar to women who work in "clean rooms" in high tech firms). One woman said:

A veces, cuando estamos fuera de los campos, no nos reconocemos, no sabemos quien estuvo trabajando en la cuartilla, pues no sabemos que ropa llevaba abajo, pues todo estaba tapado. Salvo por la voz y los ojos es que a veces nos podemos reconocer. (Sometimes when we are outside the fields, we don't recognize ourselves, we don't know who is working in the crew, because there are so many layers of clothing, and everything is covered up. It's by voice and the eyes that at times we can recognize one another.)

Such cloistering challenged women's ability to form close social relations with fellow women workers:

A mi me ha pasado que cuando recojo a mi hija en la tarde en la escuela, oigo la voz de alguien y entonces me 'cae el veinte' y me digo: 'creo que la Juana estuvo hoy trabajando conmigo. This happened to me, when I went to pick up my daughter at school, I hear someone's voice and then 'the light bulb goes on' and I say, 'I think that Juana was working with me today.'

One woman expressed her sense of estrangement regarding her work conditions: "*A principio es difícil, luego, te acostumbras. Es como si no fueras tu. Muchas ideas se atraviesan.* (At first it is difficult, later you get used to it. Its like you are not yourself. Many ideas cross my mind.)"

After work, farm worker women often drive or walk home on the streets in their work clothes. Occasionally, one can see them removing their "uniforms" in preparation for their private lives. Upon removing the barriers to the elements and harassment are they transformed from sexual objects to women situated within varied social settings. In the context of heavy male-female ratios and unregulated work sites, women farmworkers faced a "social schizophrenia." In their work sites farm worker women became "aliens" with a diffuse personal identity, wrapped in many layers of clothes, which function as a protective barrier to the hostile environment --including work and weather conditions, as well as male harassment.

A second set of changes, or remappings of the social body, occurs in relation to marriage and the family. For women who are single, even if their prospects are impeded by having many children, there is a wealth of potential marriage partners. Alicia Gonzáles, a middle-aged single-mother with five children, had been abandoned by her spouse after migrating to California. She considered herself as not particularly attractive since she was over-weight and middle-aged. She enrolled in a local community clinic's literacy and English as a Second Language program. Over the course of many months of working on her human capital in between stints of working in the fields, she joined a women's support group, whose activities included aerobics classes and discussing personal problems. Thus our focus group seemed a natural extension of this group's

activities. During one focus group discussion she disclosed her newfound attractiveness in the farmworker community with great aplomb: "Look at me, I'm getting old, I'm fat, and I have five kids. And already I've had two marriage proposals! One man promised to support me and be a father to my kids. But I decided its better not to [accept his proposal]. You can't trust men. Its better if I work to support them myself."

A third set of changes relates to sexuality more directly. With the availability of so many potential sexual partners in a context of often less social control than they experienced in Mexico, women learned to negotiate choices they did not have previously. These choices include everything from where they walk on the streets to recreation possibilities. They would avoid the streets where sex workers congregate so as not to face propositions from drunken men who could not tell "working girls" from other women. Women also sought adventure and perhaps romance at local dance halls. On weekend nights the local dance halls become sites of aggressive encounters with men, not all of it disagreeable, and even sites of independence and pleasure. If single, it was relatively easy to find romantic partners at the dance halls. However, even married women find the dances sites of pleasure. One married, middle-aged woman's eyes sparkled as she told me, "I can go to the night club and pick and choose my partners. The men line up and I choose: 'you, you and you.' I go for the tall cowboys," she confided. "And I can dance all night long. It's so much fun! And then I go home by myself."

If married, women found that finding time and a place to have sex with their husbands became another new challenge. For example, Carmen lived in a household with 20 male

farmworkers and her son, and they slept in a corner of a room cordoned off with a rope and blanket. She considered herself "unnatural" since her innate sex drive (*la naturaleza*) was stronger than her husband's, and thus was "like a man's." Thus she repeatedly had to negotiate securing some privacy from her apartment mates and child so the couple could have sexual intercourse. Other women, married to men who made regular trips as part of their jobs, produce truckers for example, and living in nuclear households, made it a point to schedule in time for privacy from the children so they could have sex. As Dora explained: "My husband is gone all week. And he meets lots of women while making his deliveries. I want to make sure that he *wants* to come home. So I take care of myself, and we spend time together apart from the kids. . . I never had to think about this in Mexico." Thus these women faced a series of new opportunities for sexual encounters or relationships, and remapped their bodies as they negotiated whether they were available for sexual relations or not.

At-Risk Behavior

Despite their newfound sense of independence or even empowerment, engaging in heterosexual sexual relations can be fraught with dangers for Mexican women. Women of Mexican origin have disproportionately higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially the Human Immune Virus (HIV) and the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).¹¹ Research shows that Latinas have a particular epidemiology for contacting STIs: Typically through a

pattern of having sex with male partners who have sex with multiple partners (including other men) or prostitutes, or who use drugs.¹²

With such high proportions of men to women in the fields, there are many opportunities for getting to know men and establishing sexual encounters: “*Todos trabajamos por parejo, muchas veces atrás de mi, en el surco, viene un hombre. No siempre las cuadrillas son de puras mujeres. Depende lo que hay de trabajo.* (We all work in pairs, and many times in the furrow right behind me, there is a man. The crews are not always only women. It depends on the work.”) This suggests the possibility of engaging in at-risk behavior by women. The correlation between offer and demand is highly favorable for women who are tempted by a variety of possibilities:

Es difícil resistir a tantas tentaciones. Yo he tenido varios jóvenes que me han ofrecido, como dice la canción, 'la tierra, el cielo y las estrellas' para que pase un momento con ellos. Están muy solos y con el instinto alto. (It is difficult to resist so many temptations. I have had various young men offer me, as the song says, ‘the earth, the heavens and the stars’ if I will spend some time with them. They are very lonely and have strong urges.)

Women experience empowerment by working outside the household and earning their own money--in a context dominated by men--but also by re-drawing their self-image in relation to the appreciation made by men, especially if they are handsome and younger than the women. Research shows that engaging in sexual gratification can provoke relaxation regarding self-

control. In the sexual arena this can be translated to engagement in unprotected sexual practices with others than the main sexual partner, or the spouse. One woman explained:

En los campos esta nuestra mejor raza. Hay jóvenes muy guapos, fuertotes y a veces que están tan solícitos y que te juran amor. A veces es difícil resistir. Y como vienen de pueblitos chicos de México, pues uno piensa que no hay mucho problema. Además están tan solos, no conocen a nadie acá. (Our best people are working in the fields. There are young men who are very handsome and strong, and sometimes are very solicitous and they promise love. Sometimes it is difficult to resist. And since they come from the small towns of Mexico, well one thinks that there won't be any problem. In addition, they are so alone, they don't know anyone here.)

Another woman elaborated on the opportunities for privacy for sexual encounters that had not been available to her in Mexico:

Acá en los EE.UU. se facilitan las cosas. Hay moteles, la gente tiene caro y como uno trabaja, pues se puede escapar sin que nadie se de cuenta. Pero eso si, uno tiene que cuidarse, hasta de la expresión de la cara, pues si no, te delatas. (Here in the US things are easier. There are motels, everyone has a car, and since one works, well you can escape and no one will notice. For that reason you have to take care of yourself, even as far as your facial expression, or else you will get stuck.)

The new social context in which the women's body is re-mapped is often less restrictive than it is in Mexico for these women. "Modernity" and its artifacts (work outside the home, their own income, cars, motels, nightclubs, etc.) enable women to subvert patriarchal mechanisms of control. However, women continue to experience some anxieties generated by the traditional embodied norms and values *en el otro lado*. The free exercise of their sexual desires is usually controlled by the fear of being betrayed by some signs inscribed upon the body, that could be read by themselves (where they engage in self-punishment) and by the society where the sanctions can be severe. These women turn peripheral vision upon themselves and their deportment.

Moreover, it is well known that the Mexican male migrant farm worker population in the U.S. is a high-risk group for contacting sexually transmitted infections.¹³ The fact that their male partners might be involved in risk sexual behavior, is one of the major risks experienced by these women. For instance, their partners could be at risk of acquiring an STI by having unprotected sexual relations with commercial sex workers (male or female) who work at or near the camps, mainly during the peak of the harvest season. The number of potential clients is highly attractive for them and their pimps. In this scenario, there is a high proportion of single men who are lonely and have money. Married men use commercial sex services as well. Some of the women's partners traveled extensively bringing the crops to different parts of the country. In these trips, men may experience extramarital unprotected sexual practices. When returning to their spouses, they are unlikely to use condoms that would jeopardize their credibility and be a sign of

acceptance of unacceptable behavior. Further, the mobility of the farm worker population means that there is a close relationship between migrant status and the increase in HIV and AIDS in rural Mexico as well (Castañeda et al. 2000).

Mexicanas in the US have barriers to health care, including low incomes, low rates of medical insurance, language use (either predominantly Spanish or indigenous language use), lack of transportation, and beliefs that HIV is a "gay disease" and thus does not affect them.¹⁴

Noncitizen Mexicanas, who either were tested themselves or know someone who was tested under the amnesty provisions of the Immigration Control and Reform Act, often fear they will be deported if they test positive for HIV (Romero and Argüelles 1993). Condom use is heavily influenced by Latino religious and cultural practices, and one study indicated that 78 percent of the Latino respondents had never used a condom Catholics are banned from using condoms because it is considered an "unnatural" form of contraception. Further, condom use is often associated with extramarital sex or prostitution. The study notes, "[this linkage] makes the Spanish word for condom a vulgar term to both male and female Mexicans. In [one] study, women expressed feelings of shame and embarrassment about their partners' use of a condom" (Ryan 1988:1).

Mindful that the US provides complex new freedoms and dangers to be negotiated, one woman stated: "*aquí la batalla es diferente que la en México* (here the struggle is different than the struggle we face in Mexico)." Another woman was clear about the risks of her new found independence, as well as the oscillation in her thinking: "*Lo que hago aquí, que no puedo hacer*

allá y los riesgos que enfrento si soy descubierta. (What I do here, that I cannot do over there, and the risks that I face if I am discovered.") Whether those differences originated in new circumstances or other processes like aging, that these women remembered Mexico--either with nostalgia or relief at having left--it is significant that they compare their lives now to their lives previously.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the changes in gendered sexuality we have illustrated here, these women live "divided lives" and construct their heterosexual notions of sexuality in localized terms that include the perspective that their lives are changing in response to migration and other changes set in motion by processes of globalization. In this unstable and contested social climate, these women construct new subjectivities regarding their work, their families, and even their bodies.

Despite the enormous and valuable fruits of their labor, migrant farmworkers frequently are marginalized by society and experience racism and hostility in the communities in which they live and work. Poor nutrition, stress, domestic violence, unprotected sexual intercourse --all provide fertile ground for the spread of infections among Mexican women farmworkers and facilitate the transmission and/or progression of HIV, HPV and unintended pregnancies. An increase of existing resources is urgently needed, both for improving the quality of life among migrant women who already suffer from marked historical disadvantages due to minority status,

and to address the growing rates of teenage pregnancy and the epidemic of sexually transmitted infections among farm workers.

There are several policy implications of this research. Perhaps the most important is the need for higher wages, and better monitoring of working conditions that create the health problems documented here. Since farm labor has always been outside the purview of much labor regulation, this may necessitate separate legislation and more allocations for monitoring conditions in the fields. We cannot stress enough the importance of implementing strong policies regarding the sexual harassment that women face while working at California farms. The lack of enforcement of existing laws preventing sexual harassment constitutes an important barrier for women farmworkers, pushing them into situations in which they are discriminated against as women and work in hostile work environments. Further, there is dire need for more funding to clinics and community-based organizations that provide services to farmworkers and their families.

The political climate in California today poses serious problems for implementing prevention strategies and health education programs among Mexican-origin populations. Many services that traditionally have provided services to this population are experiencing major financial restrictions and others could easily disappear. Optimization of existing resources is urgently needed, both in terms of improving the quality of life among Mexican-origin populations and by reducing preventable problems.

Mexican women farmworkers have developed strategies for hiding or displaying their sexualized bodies while working in a predominantly male environment. Thus remapping the Mexican body involves multiple local processes of negotiating gendered expectations, mindful that regions like Watsonville or Salinas are like "little Méxicos," social worlds that are predominantly Mexicano and, simultaneously, profoundly different from Mexico. And, just as our subjects "remap" their bodies and negotiate gender and sexuality in relation to two localized contexts linked by globalization processes, those of us doing research in the Americas must increasingly pay attention to shifting local/global connections as Mexicanas cross multiple borders.

Notes

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¹ It is estimated that there are as many as 4 million migratory and seasonal farm workers in the US, including 1.6 million migratory workers and 2.4 million seasonal workers (Bureau of Primary Health Care 2000).

² According to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), there are about 5 million undocumented residents in the US. Of these, at least 72 percent were estimated to be of Latino origin. Approximately 40 percent of undocumented Latinos live in California alone. Mexicans are by far the largest undocumented population in the US comprising around 55 percent of the total undocumented population (US Department of Justice 1997).

³ Remittances, which are the second largest source of revenue for the Mexican economy, pay to maintain households in sending communities (Lozano Ascencio 1993).

⁴ Agriculture is classified as one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. Farmworkers experience the highest rate of toxic chemical injuries of any group of workers in the country, and more than any other group, and they suffer from and even die from heat stress and dehydration. Farmworkers' life expectancy is estimated to be only 49 years. Some health concerns are clearly attributable to the occupational hazards of farm work, and include toxic chemical injuries, dermatitis, respiratory problems, dehydration and heat stroke, urinary tract infections. Others stem from poverty and poor living conditions, including diabetes, depression is common among farmworker adults, often related to isolation and economic hardship (Environmental Work Group 1987).

⁵ Farmworker children suffer from poor nutrition, which causes pre- and post-partum deaths, as well as anemia, extreme dental problems, and poor mental and physical development. Seventy

three percent of migrant children are completely without health insurance (National Advisory Council on Migrant Health 1993).

⁶ The women agreed to ground rules of respecting confidentiality and different viewpoints, and taking turns in speaking for the audio recording. The focus group generated a set of concepts for further exploration during the in-depth interviews with individuals. The ethnographic methodology also includes participant observation in communities where these women live and work. For discussion of focus group methodology, see Morgan (1993).

⁷ For the little research on farm worker women, see de la Torre (1993) and Buss (1993). For research on farmworkers in general, see Griffith and Kissam 1995).

⁸ For a full discussion and critique of this cultural master script, see Zavella (1997).

⁹ For a full discussion of this analysis, with ethnographic data from the interviews, see Zavella (forthcoming).

¹⁰ For discussions of Chicana feminist writings on women's need for rights related to reproduction and sexuality, see Garcia (1997) and Blackwell (forthcoming).

¹¹ According to the Center for Disease Control, between 1991 and 1992 Hispanics increased from 9 to 16.7 percent of people with AIDS. See Russel (1993), Ickovics and Rodin (1992) Martin (1995), Mishra (et al. 1997).

¹² For a discussion of Latinas at risk for AIDS, see Amaro (1988), Argüelles and Rivero (1988), Romero and Argüelles (1988) Mays and Cochran (1988) Nyamathi and Vasquez (1989), Selik (et al. 1989), Singer (et al. 1990).

¹³ Latinas often are unaware of their risk status. Latino adolescents (male and female) are twice as likely as white adolescents to have misconceptions about the causal transmission of AIDS, and may be at greater risk of HIV infection as a consequence of engaging in unsafe sexual practices attributable to insufficient information about prevention. Among adult Latinos, those of Mexican origin are more likely to have less knowledge about HIV and AIDS, particularly the elderly and those with less than 12 years of school (DiClemente et al. 1988; Dawson and Hardy 1989).

¹⁴ Hispanics have high rates of illiteracy in English and Spanish: One-third of those between 15 and 45 self-report illiteracy in English and almost 40 percent report they are illiterate in Spanish. Thus many have trouble reading instructions on condom use. Further, for a variety of cultural and other reasons, Hispanics are less likely to have reported use of condoms (Richwald et al. 1989; Romero and Argüelles 1993).

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