

BUNKHOUSE DRAMA:  
AN EXAMINATION OF CONTROL AND AGENCY AMONG MIGRANT FARM  
WORKERS IN ONTARIO, CANADA

by

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**Abstract**

This thesis examines workers' experiences of control and agency at the micro-political level of the dormitory/workplace in the context of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). I ask: 1) How are individual migrant workers responding to workplace and (im)migration policies and practices that aim to produce a flexible and compliant workforce; and 2) what forms of creative research strategies are best suited to documenting and examining the private, largely hidden lives of migrant farm workers? The thesis sheds light on the daily forms of resilience, opposition and survival among an entrenched, yet largely hidden workforce on the margins of Canada's labour market. I conducted my fieldwork in the town of Leamington, Ontario, a well-established hub of Canada's greenhouse industry, and as such a significant terminus for SAWP workers. In order to fully engage workers in the research process, I incorporated a qualitative, embodied, active and participatory approach to research grounded in life history, personal narrative, and drama-based methods. Through my interactions with workers I explore in detail how colonial attitudes operate alongside Canada's official policy of multiculturalism in the context of migration and employment among 'low-skilled' guest workers. Throughout the thesis I examine workers' stories through the conceptual lenses of worker agency, workplace relations and worker emancipation. My research reveals that in tightly controlled and surveilled workplace environments workers learn to be intensely competitive and to distrust each other as a means of survival, resulting in a deep sense of isolation among workers, thus stifling potential opportunities for building group solidarity. However, I found that workers' participation in non-work related activities during leisure hours produced small breaches in the accepted norms of control, offering potentially rich opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue. I argue that an analysis of complex and even contradictory worker subjectivities that are developed and performed in everyday life among Canada's SAWP workers offers a more

nuanced understanding of worker solidarities, collective social movements and the potential for labour education at the margins of Canada's labour market.

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	x
Chapter 1: Bunkhouse Drama: A Program of Research.....	1
Fieldwork and Findings .....	5
Chapter Summaries.....	7
Chapter 2: “Somos Sujetos”: Power, Control and the Embodied Experience of Employment in Canada’s SAWP.....	12
From Indentured Servant to Guest Worker: Slavery with an Expiration Date? .....	14
Precarious Citizenship and the Limited Rights of Migrant Farm Workers in Canada: A Brief Overview.....	19
Stranger Fetishism as State of Exception.....	23
Controlling the Flow of Migrant Bodies: Non-Citizenship and Bio-Power .....	24
‘Petty Sovereigns’ and Privatized Discrimination.....	29
The Distribution of the Sensible: Placing Migrant Bodies in the Home/Workplace.....	34
Embodied Experiences of Employment within Canada’s SAWP .....	41
Conclusion .....	46
Chapter 3: Agency, Performance, Rupture: A Theoretical Framework .....	48
Agency and Subjectivity.....	50
Performance .....	59
Bunkhouse Relations: A Dramaturgical and Embodied Analysis .....	59

‘Intimacy without Warmth’: Familiarity, Dramaturgical Cooperation and Bunkhouse Relations .....	66
<i>El Relajo</i> and Bunkhouse Relations: Spoiling the Desire for Freedom? .....	69
Rupture.....	73
Rupture, Emancipation, Aesthetics: Implications for Adult Education.....	80
Conclusion .....	85
Chapter 4: An Exploration of Migrant Worker Agency through Personal Narratives and Kinesthetic Inquiry: A Reflection on Methods.....	87
A Personal Narrative and Kinesthetic Approach to Exploring Migrant Worker Agency .....	88
Life History/Personal Narrative.....	88
Kinesthetic Inquiry.....	91
Data Analysis .....	98
A Note on the Political Ontology of the Research Encounter .....	99
A Note on My Positionality Vis-à-Vis this Research.....	101
Conclusion .....	104
Chapter 5: Participant Demographics and Brief Sketches of Key Players.....	106
A Note on Demographics.....	106
Table 1: Research Participants in Alphabetical Order.....	107
Brief Sketches of Four Key Players.....	110
Enrique.....	110
Ignacio.....	112
Iván .....	115

Joaquín .....	118
Chapter 6: ‘La Vida de Correr’: ‘Slave Work’ and Bunkhouse Relations .....	121
‘Slave Work’ .....	122
Bound to the Bunkhouse: Workers’ Descriptions of Confinement Tethered to the Workplace .....	126
Bunkhouse conditions.....	128
Bunkhouse rules and the regulation of sexuality .....	130
‘Deportability’ and the pressure to produce.....	136
‘La Lucha por la Ducha’: Bunkhouse Relations and Narratives of Personal Responsibility .	144
Conclusion .....	151
Chapter 7: Adaptation and Opposition: Workers’ Portrayals of Survival and Competition .....	153
Bodily Movements and Learning to Cope .....	154
Adaptation and Opposition: The Dialectic of Discipline and Freedom as Coping Mechanism .....	157
Exploring Adaptation and Opposition through Collective Creation.....	164
Survival Strategies and Co-worker Relations: A Generational Clash .....	169
Conclusion .....	176
Chapter 8: From the Street to the Stage: Workers’ Experiences of Free Time and the Politics of Artistic Creation.....	179
Finding Freedom “in the Street”: The Perceived ‘Problem’ of the Migrant Flâneur .....	180
Finding Refuge in Leisure Time: Friendship, Community and the ‘Thrill’ of Learning English .....	185

Disturbing what is Visible and Sayable through Artistic Expression.....	190
Action over Text: Physicalization, Community and the Making of ‘El Mero Mole’ .....	192
Disrupting the Political Lay of the Land: The Risk and Value of Making Art .....	198
Conclusion .....	203
Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks.....	205
Bunkhouse Drama: What I Uncovered.....	205
The Significance to Scholarship .....	207
Next Steps.....	210
Suggestions for Praxis .....	211
A Final Word .....	214
Works Cited .....	215
Endnotes.....	241

## List of Figures

Figure 1: A typical Leamington bunkhouse.....	128
Figure 2: Horario's dormitory .....	129

## **Chapter 1: Bunkhouse Drama: A Program of Research**

Bunkhouses can be dramatic places. These small and frequently overcrowded living quarters often function as the main stage for the behind-the-scenes power dynamics that emerge among Canada's migrant farm workers. While my area of research spreads beyond the confines of these employer-provided dormitories, I am cognizant that the bunkhouse plays a fundamental role in the world of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). These communal housing units, located directly on employers' properties, serve as both the primary site of daily social reproduction for workers and as the central node of state and employer surveillance. I therefore consider these spaces to be a crucial entry point for developing a nuanced understanding of workers' own experiences of participating in Canada's SAWP.

Both intimate and exposed, the bunkhouse is a good point of departure for exploring how this merger of public and private life shapes SAWP workers' responses to the problems they face, both at work and in the community. As such, the bunkhouse, and the function it plays in workers' everyday lives, is central to the story I am about to tell.

More important, however, is my focus on the perceptions and voices of workers themselves. While the bunkhouse is a useful symbol for representing the sheer intensity of ordinary life in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, it is workers' own stories of negotiating everyday power relations that provide the substance to my work. Through data gleaned from semi-structured interviews and theatre-based participatory-style workshops, this thesis explores the experiences of 30 SAWP workers in the municipality of Leamington, Ontario. In the following pages I provide a thorough examination of workers' thoughts and actions in response to a living and working arrangement designed to manufacture a productive and acquiescent agricultural workforce.

In this introductory chapter, I will introduce the questions that guide my research, explore my connection to the participants and provide a brief overview of the dissertation as a whole. In order to provide the most vivid explanation possible of how I came to conduct this research, I would like to first share the following story.

*Sweat and soil caked to Alberto's skin against the hard wind that blew across the flatbed. His right hand clasped his cap while his left searched for something to hold onto to keep from sliding from the truck. His bones vibrated with the shake of the moving vehicle. Alberto and a half-dozen or so of his colleagues had wrapped themselves precariously around the edge of their employer's truck. They had all just finished a 12-hour shift planting tobacco. Alberto's back was sore. Like everyone else, he was tired. He looked forward to his nightly phone call with his wife later that evening, but he dreaded the ninety-minute return bike ride to the nearest payphone. He also wasn't looking forward to the night's restless sleep on the cot that his Canadian boss was obligated to provide. Alberto thought of the overcrowded bunkhouse and his aching joints reminded him that he hadn't had a full night's sleep in months. Without thinking, he lay down to rest.*

*Just then, the truck came to a sudden stop and the driver shoved open his door and rounded on Alberto.*

*"You think you're tired, now?" Alberto's boss yelled. "Let me give you another four hours and then we'll see how tired you are. My Mexicans. Don't. Sit. On. Their. Asses." The boss ordered Jakob, a Mexican Mennonite employee who occupied the passenger seat, to translate. Without hesitation, Alberto responded in Spanish that he didn't care how much he was yelled at, that he would soon be back in Mexico.*

*Jakob refused to translate. No one talks back to the boss, and he was fuming. "You can make the rules once you start signing the checks around here. One more word out of you and I'm sending all of you back." Before struggling back into the driver's seat and speeding away, the boss stared directly into each worker's eyes just long enough so that they each had no choice but to look away. Silence ruled the ride back to the bunkhouse. None of Alberto's co-workers spoke to him that evening and the entire next day<sup>1</sup>.*

The workers portrayed in this story are SAWP workers. The SAWP is a bilateral labour migration program between Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, and several Caribbean countries. In place since 1966, the SAWP is Canada's longest running managed labour migration program. The particular workers on this flatbed truck come from Mexico and spend six to eight months of every year working in Canada's agricultural sector. The agricultural regions of southern Ontario receive the lion's share of SAWP workers. There are at least three elements of this story that are relevant to my research and to what led to my writing this dissertation.

First, this story illustrates how power operates in the social relations that workers are exposed to and engage in. Specifically, the employer's reaction to Alberto's small act of noncompliance hints at employer and state practices that I argue below are intended to produce a compliant and docile workforce. For example, in the story the employer verbally harasses his workers with impunity and even threatens his workers with deportation for the slightest instance of defiance. In all likelihood, all of these workers know that the employer's threats may or may not be empty, as these workers are probably well aware that the state, through the mechanism of the SAWP, bestows the employer with the ultimate power to decide who may and who may not stay (temporarily, at least) in the country. To complicate matters further, Alberto's act of antagonism toward the employer is not well received by his co-workers. Instead of defending their workmate, Alberto's co-workers avoid eye contact with the boss and exclude Alberto from all social interaction for a full day and a half.

Second, Alberto's behaviour illustrates how individual SAWP workers do not always choose to perform deference toward their Canadian employers. The story also illustrates how oppositional conduct from individual workers can result in serious repercussions for workers themselves, from social ostracization to potential repatriation. This story thus hints at the power dynamics at play in how the SAWP workplace is organized. Specifically, the responses of both Alberto's employer and his co-workers to his humble act of defiance show how practices of power and control shape workers' experiences of migration and work in the public sphere, but also how they shape friendship and camaraderie in the more private sphere of daily life. This story may serve to illustrate how the orchestration of power in the SAWP may have profound implications for the development of trusting relationships and group solidarity among SAWP workers.

The third element I would like to highlight is that this story is my eyewitness account of what

happened on that day, as I was one of Alberto's co-workers on that flatbed truck. In 2003 and 2004, I worked as a Frontier College labourer-teacher. In this job I worked on three farms in southern Ontario: a tobacco farm in Norfolk County, a cherry orchard in the Niagara Region and a peach orchard in Essex County. During the day I worked in the fields alongside SAWP workers. In the evenings I provided English as a Second Language (ESL) and basic literacy classes to my co-workers. During this time I lived in employer-provided dormitories (bunkhouses) with workers from Mexico. My experiences in this job inspired me to pursue a masters' degree, and later a doctoral degree, in Adult Education and Community Development at OISE/UT.

Once in graduate school, I started to steep myself in the extant literature on the topic of temporary foreign workers in Canada. It was through this preliminary research that I realized that my direct and very intimate experiences working and living among workers provided me with a unique perspective on the everyday lives of workers – a perspective that I found was largely lacking from academic accounts. Over the course of the past few years, I have been working on developing scholarly knowledge that speaks to workers' own performances of agency and control in the context of a labour migration arrangement that is largely characterized by despotic management practices and disciplinary immigration controls.

To be specific, it was episodes like the one portrayed in the story that led me to the current research project and to ask the following research question: how are migrant workers responding to workplace and (im)migration policies and practices that all but ensure a flexible and compliant workforce? This question has continued to guide my research.

In the summer following my work as a labourer-teacher I worked as a community outreach worker in the town of Leamington, Ontario, a small city of roughly 30,000 inhabitants in Ontario's Essex County, on the northern shores of Lake Erie just south-east of Windsor. Leamington's main industry is the tomato, cucumber and pepper greenhouse sector, which hires roughly 4,000-5,000 migrant workers each year. As the majority of Leamington's agricultural economy relies on indoor greenhouse labour, the work is not as seasonal as outdoor farm work, such as tobacco or field vegetables. Consequently, there is a constant year-round circulation of migrant farm workers to the area. As such, over the years Leamington has become a significant destination for SAWP workers, and the city has changed as a result. Many shops and restaurants

in the downtown area, for example, now cater nearly exclusively to the migrant worker population. In the words of labour photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo: “Mexican migrant farm workers have ostensibly left their imprint, and Leamington, the tomato capital of Canada, will never be the same again” (Pietropaolo, 2009, p. 22).

In my position of community outreach worker, a part of my job included teaching an advanced ESL class for SAWP workers on weekday evenings. About 10-15 workers would regularly hop on their bicycles and cycle into town after work to attend these classes. Near the beginning of the summer a small group of students approached me with the request to develop a play about their experiences of work and migration and to hold a performance at the end of the summer. In the weeks that followed, a small group of workers and I met once a week to collectively explore their experiences and to turn these into a play that was then performed for an audience of fellow workers and local community members. In the play that my students and I created, we examined issues relevant to the migrant worker experience, including family separation and workers’ struggles associated with integrating into Canadian society. This summer-long project provided an unexpected and, I think, quite unique way to bring workers together to think through issues relevant to the collective experience of participating in Canada’s temporary foreign worker program. By approaching me to organize this project, these particular workers conveyed a desire for cultural expression as well as a need to articulate their private experiences in a public forum. My experience of facilitating the creation and performance of this play has also shaped the development of the present research project.

Specifically, given what I considered to be a successful endeavour at engaging workers collectively, I realized that any academic research that I was to undertake among migrant workers needed to prioritize collective participation, action and embodied knowledge. This has led to the following question: what forms of creative research strategies are best suited to documenting and examining the private, largely hidden lives of migrant farm workers?

### **Fieldwork and Findings**

Fieldwork for this project took place over the course of eight months in 2011. Outreach primarily involved putting up flyers in local businesses, approaching workers on the street on Sunday afternoons and presenting my project during Frontier College ESL classes on evenings and weekends. I began conducting interviews in April and facilitating drama-based workshops in

May. In the interviews, workers were asked to comment on their employment and migration objectives, their experiences of migration and of participation in the SAWP, the factors involved in assessing their general satisfaction toward their current employment and living situations, and how all of these influence the decision-making processes that underlie their choices of how to respond to problems at work and in the bunkhouse.

The workshops involved popular education-style activities, collective play creation and a final dramatic performance for an invited group of workers. Similar to the interviews, these workshops focused on workers' subjective experiences of exploitation and action in the context of the SAWP. As these weekly workshops were attended by a small and regular group of participants, I was able to delve deeper into how social relations, such as those that develop in the intimacy of the bunkhouse, shape workers' decisions to either oppose or accommodate undesirable workplace conditions.

As the interviews and workshops were taking place simultaneously, I developed a dialectic relationship between the interviews and workshops in such a way that each could inform the other. Workshop participants were invited to explore and examine the experiences of fellow SAWP workers as expressed in the interviews. Similarly, discussions that emerged from the weekly workshops influenced the conversations that I initiated during the interviews. The end of my fieldwork was punctuated with a collective performance of a play created by my workshop participants that was developed out of the research data as it emerged throughout the fieldwork. This was followed by a post-performance discussion in which the audience of workers was invited to engage with both the substance of the play and the politics surrounding workers' participating in artistic creation and performance. Once the data was collected, the interviews, workshops, the performance, and the post-performance discussion were transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were analyzed using Nvivo software. In the case when interviews and discussions took place in Spanish, only the relevant excerpts were translated into English for the purposes of presenting them within the body of the thesis itself.

In my doctoral research I demonstrate several findings that have both empirical and theoretical implications for understanding the growing phenomenon of temporary foreign labour migration in Canada. First and foremost, I make the argument that policies and practices associated with Canada's temporary foreign worker program for 'lower-skilled' workers continue to operate

within colonial relations that must be understood in the context of a history of slavery and indentured servitude. Policies such as the inability to apply for permanent residency and practices that confine workers to the worksite produce a particular distribution of migrant bodies that effectively constrains migrant workers to pre-determined places and tasks. My interest is in how workers' embodied experiences of these colonial relations may in fact limit and/or generate oppositional migrant subjectivities because of or indeed in spite of the obvious constraints to agency and mobility. To this end, in this dissertation I highlight several key findings developed from conversations, discussions and artistic explorations with workers themselves.

As an introduction, I will highlight three. First, research participants described workplace and living situations dominated by methods of control and surveillance that occur within an employment relationship in which employers and state officials have increased sovereign power over workers. These experiences generate significant social and psychological stress that pervades workers' daily social interactions. The result is an exceptionally strained set of workplace relations among co-workers. Second, my interview and workshop analysis reveals that over the long-term, workers learn to adapt to exploitative workplace conditions and strained workplace relations. In time, workers develop tacitly accepted group rituals that support workers' collective adaptation. These tacitly understood ways of being are more pronounced among older and more experienced workers and inevitably clash with attitudes and practices held by younger and newer workers who have not yet been fully integrated into SAWP culture. The result is a dialectical performance of rejection and integration between younger and older workers that can stifle opportunities for building group solidarity. Third, workers' participation in non-work related activities during leisure hours, such as learning English or engaging in community events produces a small breach in the accepted norms of control, offering a potentially rich opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue. In particular, workers' participation in artistic creation and exploration offer a particularly potent, yet especially risky occasion to experiment with subject positions other than that of 'migrant worker'.

### **Chapter Summaries**

In Chapters 2 and 3, I lay out theoretical framework within which I frame my overall argument. The dissertation proper begins with "Chapter 2: 'Somos Sujetos': Power, Control and the Embodied Experience of Employment in Canada's SAWP." The purpose of this chapter is to

examine in a comprehensive way the overall context in which this story takes place. By examining the experiences of SAWP workers through the conceptual lenses of power and control, in Chapter 2 I offer an analysis of Canada's guest worker program that emphasizes the ways in which these operate through workers' bodies. I develop the argument that workers' embodied experiences of employment and migration reproduce colonial relations in both the workplace and the community. In this chapter, I provide a wide-ranging summary of a) the historical underpinnings of Canada's temporary foreign worker program, b) the program's complicated relationship to Canada's policy of official multiculturalism, c) how a system that physically tethers workers to the worksite serves to constrain migrant bodies to particular places and tasks, and d) how workers' embodied experiences of power and control may produce new migrant subjectivities that belie and oppose those on offer.

In "Chapter 3: Agency, Performance, Rupture: A Theoretical Framework", I discuss three key concepts that inform my analysis of the data. In this chapter I bring together theories that are not normally combined, but which together provide a unique and meaningful interpretation of workers' daily negotiation of accommodation and opposition in the bunkhouse/workplace and the local community. First, I address the concept of labour agency, with a particular emphasis on migrant worker agency. In particular, I explore how everyday forms of resistance and deference have been discussed in the scholarly literature. Second, I introduce the concept of performance. I explore this theme in the context of the everyday bunkhouse and workplace relations, as they exist in the context of the SAWP. An examination of performance in this context provides a window to understanding how power relations influence workers' decisions to either perform or subvert pre-determined roles. Finally, the concept of rupture is introduced in order to highlight the potential for worker emancipation, in particular highlighting emergent subjectivities supported by workers' desires for freedom.

In the following two chapters I provide a theoretical and empirical overview of my methodological process. In "Chapter 4: An Exploration of Migrant Worker Agency through Personal Narratives and Kinesthetic Inquiry: A Reflection on Methods", I argue that a focus on migrant subjectivity needs to incorporate an attitude to knowledge production that approaches workers not just as informants, but rather as 'knowers' (Gellatly et al., 2014). In this chapter I provide a synopsis of how I undertook this approach, namely by engaging workers through

personal narrative on the one hand, and through a more hands-on embodied and artistic approach on the other. I offer a detailed synopsis of the epistemological underpinnings that ground my work and a discussion of methods, research design and data analysis. As well, in this chapter I provide a reflection on both my own positionality with regards to the research as well as a reflection concerning the ontological implications of conducting an ‘action research’-style project with migrant workers in Canada. This chapter is followed by “Chapter 5: Demographics and Participant Sketches.” The purpose of this short chapter is to introduce my participants. In addition to providing a short description of my participants as a whole, I also delve deeper into the lives of four key participants. Together, chapters 4 and 5 offer a bridge between the more conceptual chapters in the first half of the thesis and the more empirical chapters in the second.

In the following three chapters I engage directly with my data. In “Chapter 6: ‘La Vida de Correr’: ‘Slave Work’ and Bunkhouse Relations”, I place workers’ own experiences in Canada’s SAWP within the context of colonial relations. In this chapter I examine workers’ subjective and embodied experiences of power, control and surveillance in the context of what I call the living-at-work arrangement. The chapter revolves around workers’ own portrayals of the SAWP that represent life in the program as deeply stressful, dehumanizing and precarious. Next I provide an analysis of how intensely competitive and distrustful workplace relations develop in this environment, engendering a profound sense of individualism and isolation among workers. In the following chapter, “Chapter 7: Adaptation and Opposition: Workers’ Portrayals of Survival and Competition”, I focus on workers’ perceptions and experiences of adapting to and opposing disciplinary practices in their daily lives. In this chapter, I emphasize workers’ own capacities to respond to pressures at work in spite of the enormous constraints. Throughout the chapter I discuss a range of responses, from quiet accommodation on the one hand to outright opposition on the other. Crucially, these are portrayed primarily as tactics of sheer survival rather than of individual or collective forms of resistance, and discuss how these tactics tend to engender a generational rift that can entrench a sense of overall disconnection. In this chapter I address the notion of agency as it applies to SAWP workers. My findings suggest that agency in the context of the dormitory/workplace is a complex notion that encapsulates a range of activities, intentions and attitudes, including the desire to stay silent as a means of survival as well as the need to be oppositional in the face of exploitation. In the final data chapter, “Chapter 8: From the Street to the Stage: Workers’ Experiences of Free Time and the Politics of Artistic Creation”, I observe

workers' attempts to engage with life outside of the bunkhouse and the workplace. In this chapter, I engage with workers' own depictions of 'freedom' in the context of the SAWP. This portrayal leads to a discussion of finding refuge and building community through such activities as hanging out in town after work and ESL classes in the context of the current local politics of urban rejuvenation and renewal. I end with a reflection on workers' perceptions and experiences of participating in an action research project that incorporates an artistic approach to engaging workers themselves as the primary subject of their own lives. In examining workers' experiences of life outside the dormitory/workplace and in what capacities they are able to break with pre-determined subject positions, and their perceptions of the risks involved in doing so, I present in this chapter a reflection on the idea of rupture as it may apply to the potential for developing labour education practices in the context of Canada's guest worker program. In "Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks" I provide an overview of the entire project, as well as suggestions for future research, a reflection on the significance of this research, and suggestions for praxis directed at researchers, workers' advocates and community arts practitioners.

In presenting this research, it is my hope that I am able to put forward a more nuanced and detailed understanding of both the impacts of Canada's temporary foreign worker program on migrant workers themselves and the responses of workers to difficult working conditions while in Canada. Recently, much media and political attention has been paid to the effects that a growing temporary foreign workforce has on the Canadian labour market, in particular the potential impacts that Canadian employers' reliance on foreign workers is having on local 'Canadian' workers. Very little focus of the current discussion emphasizes the experiences, desires and responses of temporary foreign workers themselves. Current trends indicate that guest worker programs in Canada are becoming an increasingly institutionalized labour market instrument among employers in so-called 'low-skilled' industries. These include not only agriculture, but also related industries within the food production sector, such as meat and vegetable packing, as well as in the hospitality and construction industries. While there may be an increasing understanding of the macro-political dimensions both globally and within Canada to the increased reliance on temporary foreign workers, very little is understood about 'low-skilled' migrant workers' own on-the-ground responses to poor and substandard working conditions. Least understood are the particular micro-political dynamics that inform workers' decisions to either speak out or remain silent in the face of hardship – in particular those

dynamics that shape the experiences of those workers who are not formally represented by a labour union and who do not directly involved in community-based advocacy work. By focusing on worker agency and workers' subjective and embodied experiences of employment and migration, this research will both speak to scholarly debates on the role that migrant worker subjectivity plays in shaping and resisting everyday practices of labour control and to the need for developing alternative possibilities for liberating workers from deepening precariousness in employment and immigration status.

## **Chapter 2: “Somos Sujetos”: Power, Control and the Embodied Experience of Employment in Canada’s SAWP<sup>ii</sup>**

Translated into English from the original Spanish, the title of this chapter reads “We are subjects.” One research participant, named Ignacio made this statement to me during a conversation we were having about his desire to visit all of the farms on which he has worked in the past 20 years one last time before retiring for good from the program. With these two words Ignacio expressed in eloquent precision his 20 years of experience working as an ‘unfree’ labourer in Canada. In this moment he was expressing to me that he felt trapped at work and trapped in the bunkhouse. This statement was undoubtedly meant to be read as something like ‘migrant farm workers are placed under the power and control of the state and their employers’. Ignacio clearly intended to express dismay at the level of legislated and extra-judicial constraints that he felt impeded his effort to lead a normal and productive life in Canada. On the other hand, his statement could also be understood to point toward the constructed category of migrant worker subject which is produced and placed within a set of “power relations that are very complex” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778). In this iteration, workers may be seen as themselves players within more or less horizontal fields of power as benefactors, accommodators and resisters. Ignacio’s claim that “We are subjects” could also potentially hint at the phenomenological, collective and social experience of migrant farm workers as themselves embodied agents. Ignacio’s response to his situation may unwittingly reveal what it means to be a captive labourer on the one hand and on the other an active negotiator in shaping the global processes within which workers live and work. This chapter frames the experiences of migrant farm workers in such a way that navigates some of the complicated territory of what it means to be a guest worker in Canada.

By examining the practices of power and control that permeate the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), this chapter will shed light on how these may shape migrant farm workers’ embodied experiences of employment, agency and even resistance. As is evident in Ignacio’s overt intention to highlight migrant farm workers’ experiences of limited freedom through their participation in the SAWP, in order to develop an understanding of subjectivity, agency and embodiment, these must be analyzed through the constraints that permeate the program. This is consistent with Karl Marx’s famous observation that “[m]en (sic) make their own history... not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted” (Marx, 1852/2010, p. 146).

While I think Marx is right to argue that workers' experiences must be understood in historical context, this should by no means lead us to posit a strict binary between "the creative subject" on the one hand and "the constraining object" on the other, "since it fails to capture the social character of relations, practices and institutions" (Knights, 1990, p. 303). That said, I take the position here that workers' embodied experiences of control, agency and resistance, however small or seemingly insignificant, must be examined in relation to the social dynamics in which they are entrenched (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010). In this chapter, I discuss these constraints to workers' agency and freedom through the conceptual lenses of power and control, with a particular focus on how these operate through workers' bodies. Throughout this chapter I provide a detailed overview of relevant literature on the SAWP as seen through the framework of theoretical contributions that make central the production, reproduction and distribution of bodies (Bourdieu, 1977; Butler, 2004; Foucault, 1978, 1977/1995, 1997/2003; Rancière, 1999, 2004; Wolkowitz, 2006). My discussion reveals a relationship between policies associated with the SAWP and workers' embodied experiences of participating in the program that I argue reproduces and solidifies colonial relations in the workplace and in the community.

I begin my exploration with a brief overview of the SAWP that is grounded in a short historical analysis of indentured servitude in Canada and the rise of guest worker programs globally. The purpose of this section is to build the argument that while the SAWP does fit into a wider global context of temporary migrant labour regimes, it is inherited from forms of colonial transnational migration that pre-date not only mid-20<sup>th</sup> century immigration reform but also Confederation. Next, I explore how the SAWP operates within the present-day framework of official multiculturalism. In this section I argue that the SAWP facilitates the legalized disenfranchisement of non-preferred foreign bodies through the category of non-citizenship. I explore how workers' bodies come to be manipulated at the societal level of populations only to be confronted by an increase in the sovereign power of employers and state officials in their everyday lives; a power that would indeed prefer to remain hidden. Continuing with a focus on the everyday experience of employment and control in the SAWP, the next section of the chapter explores how the living-at-work arrangement that is embedded in the structure of the SAWP operates to distribute migrant worker bodies within pre-determined places and tasks in the dormitory/workplace. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of how the embodied experiences of colonial relations within the SAWP may produce new migrant subjectivities and

forms of agency that contribute to workers' own struggles to build a better life for themselves and their families.

### **From Indentured Servant to Guest Worker: Slavery with an Expiration Date?**

Conversations around the application of a system of 'unfree' labour tied to immigration in Canada did not begin with Canada's present-day iterations of its temporary foreign worker programs, nor are these conversations limited to the contemporary political context. Instead, this has been a continuous conversation that has been "fed and renewed by... [the] historic, economic and cultural needs" of the nation (Memmi, 1965, p. 91). Canada's history of labour and immigration is littered with plans designed to solve the sometimes perceived, sometimes constructed, and sometimes real problem of a scarcity of labour for hire in a range of industrial, low-wage and low-skill sectors. Finding ways of controlling the scarcity of labour was a central priority for colonial capitalists even during the pre-confederation period (Pentland, 1981; Winks, 1971). A brief historical snapshot reveals how the desire to harness a flexible and compliant transnational labour supply is not a phenomenon that is unique to the present moment (Emmer, 1986; Saunders, 1984). Managing transnational flows was a crucial element in consolidating imperial control (Hahamovitch, 2003; Van den Boogaart & Emmer, 1986). On a global scale, and particularly in the context of the United States, this has been examined in the work of feminist scholar Ann Laura Stoler (2006), who observes that "[c]olonialisms of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries drew on and animated circuits of movement that crisscrossed metropolises and peripheries..." (p. 40). In the Canadian context, one crucial element has been the problem of manufacturing a workforce that is permanently temporary yet relatively immobile given the needs of industrial sectors that are predominantly seasonal in their operation.

Though the first record of slavery in Canada dates back to New France in 1632, slavery as a system of labour migration was not provided with a legal foundation until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Winks, 1971), and even then never became a significant labour force in either New France or in British North America (Pentland, 1981; Winks, 2008). Pentland (1981) attributes the unfavourable climate to the limited use of slavery in Canada, in spite of the colony having had access to slaves for approximately two centuries<sup>iii</sup> (p. 1). While slaves could be found working in the kitchens of some of the nation's wealthy households as domestic servants (Pentland, 1981; Winks, 1971), Pentland (1981) argues that Canada's northern climate made slavery unsuitable

for colonial capitalists involved in industrial ventures such as agriculture and lumber, due to the associated costs of maintaining a slave workforce during the off-seasons. He says: “The country’s employments... fitted badly with the economics of slavery. For the economics of slavery are the economics of overhead costs...” (p. 3). Race historian Robyn Winks (2008) concurs. He provides the example of how even though the great Loyalist migration to British North America during the 1870s brought with it a large influx of plantation-trained Negro slaves, Loyalists found it was difficult to sustain a slave workforce in the North as “...once the land was cleared it was not sufficiently productive to require an extensive labor force” (p. 30). After two decades of their arrival, the Loyalist practice of slavery had all but vanished.

Earlier on in New France on the other hand, the growth of the slave trade, particularly in agriculture was impeded by external constraints stemming from the parent state of France (Winks, 1971). For example, the declaration of Queen Anne’s war in 1702 which made sea routes dangerous and sea transport limited and later French policies which limited New France’s economy to the production of beaver pelts; in other words to an economy which did not require a significant work force (p. 5). In British North America, the importation of slaves was more common in the more southerly British colonies of the Caribbean prior to 1800, and in more northerly colonies it was more typical to encounter the importation of migrants as indentured servants. These were mostly European migrants who would agree to a temporary employment contract for very low wages in return for their freedom once their contracts were terminated. Unlike slaves, these workers were willing participants in their recruitment. Pentland nonetheless describes indentured servants as “ignorant and defenceless” (p. 9); workers who could be persuaded into contractual employment relationships that amounted to slavery with an expiration date. Pentland says: “Economically, the indentured servant accepted the position of a slave – a slave with a termination date to his servitude, but a slave, nevertheless” (p. 8).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, North America experienced an increase in free-market labour as a result of a drop in ocean-liner fares from Europe (Pentland, 1981, p. 9). Eventually, indentured servants contracted from Europe to work for wage rates far below those on offer to local labourers yielded in large numbers to the temptation to renege on their contracts and enter the growing market for free labour for hire. As a result, smaller employers began to rely on the local labour force while continuing to lobby for more immigration from Europe. Here, yet again, the words of Marx

(1954/1978) are illustrative: “[t]hink of the horror! The excellent capitalist has imported bodily from Europe, with his own good money, his own competitors! The end of the world has come!” (p. 721). The increased mobility of low-skilled labourers during this period resulted in an increased interest among colonial capitalists in finding ways to legally organize and justify a system of immigration grounded in indentured servitude, low wages and constrained mobility, particularly in low-skill industries (p. 9-10). At its core, the problem faced by colonial capitalists was a problem of reproducing a flexible labour force in seasonal industrial sectors. In order to explore this notion, a brief turn to Marx is once again instructive. For Marx, “the maintenance and reproduction of the working class remains a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital”(Marx, 1954/1977, p. 718). From the perspective of colonial capitalists in the context of early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century British North America, workers’ need for self-preservation could no longer be relied upon as a dependable incentive for the reproduction of labour power. In other words, an increased supply of free-waged labour put at risk the reproduction of capital in the colonies. Colonial capitalists turned toward different reproductive strategies, including lobbying for (im)migration policies that could overtly address this problem.

Two examples are worth noting. Perhaps the most noteworthy are the ideas of Edward Gibbon Wakefield. A British politician in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wakefield was a key figure in the colonisation of much of what is now considered ‘the West’: Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Marx, 1954/1978, pp. 716-724). In his colonial treatise entitled *A View of the Art of Colonization with Present Reference to the British Empire*, published in 1849, Wakefield discusses the problem of working class indentured servants taking advantage of cheap colonial land as a way of deserting their importer capitalists. He says: “... the price of the cheapest [land in the colony] has never... been sufficient to prevent labourers from turning into landowners after a very brief turn of hired service” (Wakefield, 1849, p. 334). Access to affordable land meant working-class labourers had access to property and thus potential access to their own means of production. Wakefield lobbied the British colonial government to intervene in the price of land by passing a law that would make land more expensive in the colony as a way of pricing out working class indentured servants, thus ensuring constraints to workers’ labour mobility, and in turn the reproduction of colonial capital. Other plans included those of political reformer and colonist Robert Gourlay who, in 1822 suggested that a canal be built on the St. Lawrence River to connect Montreal to Lake Ontario (Gourlay, 1822, p. cclxxxix; Pentland, 1981, p. 10).

Gourlay suggested that 5,000 male workers (and their families) be imported from Britain under contracts that required that their cost of travel be deducted from their wages and a portion of their wages withheld until finishing their contract after a period of 18 months, at which time they would be released and another batch of men would be imported to replace them. These plans reveal how both industrial capitalists and colonial officials were preoccupied with the problem of keeping workers from deserting their employment relationships as a response to a perceived threat to the short and long-term reproduction of labour power. As Pentland notes, there were even plans afoot to enlist indentured workers into semi-military labour camps as an attempt to instil military discipline and sanctions that would force workers to remain with their importing employers (Pentland, 1981, p. 11).

Perhaps the most well-known example of indentured servitude in Canada is the recruitment of Chinese labourers between 1881 and 1885 during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (Li, 1988). That notwithstanding, the terms under which these labourers were recruited and contracted are to this day unclear (p. 17). There is some evidence, compiled by Li, that suggests that Chinese labourers were brought to Canada as indentured labourers. Li presents the following explanation on how Chinese labourers were recruited as provided to the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration:

They [the Chinese] give bonds, before leaving China, to Chinese companies to work for them for a term of five or ten years, and all that the Company have to do in order to carry out their part of the contract is to furnish them with the bare necessities of life and their clothing, and the Company have all their earnings. After they serve their time, of course, they go then and work for themselves. (as cited in Li, 1999, p. 16)

While Chinese labourers were considered indispensable to the development of Western Canada, they were by all accounts not considered desirable citizens. Chinese workers were generally perceived as socially inferior even while they were valued as cheap labour. However, the Canadian state at this time had yet to develop a widespread temporary foreign labour regime that could both accommodate the needs of capitalists and fulfill the desire to effectively exclude undesirable races from settling in Canada. While most Chinese (im)migrants at this time were

engaged in menial or manual labour for which employers had difficulty recruiting white labourers, not all of these workers came to Canada as indentured servants. Many of these labourers entered Canada as independent immigrants that were able to find work as merchants, miners and domestic servants, which fueled aggressive anti-Chinese sentiment, especially in times of economic hardship. The Western provinces' increasing pressure on the Dominion government to restrict Chinese immigration eventually led to the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 which "virtually stopped any future immigration of Chinese to Canada, and legalized the inferior status of those already in the country" (p. 31).

The early colonial plans for indentured servitude and the cumbersome experience of recruiting cheap labour from China to perform industrial tasks undesirable to white Canadians presage contemporary carceral forms of transnational labour control and discipline that permeate so-called 'low-skilled' industries today, such as in agriculture. The question of the reproduction of a cheap and flexible working class persists to this day in Canada and globally. This is evident in how the desire to exploit a migrant labour system grounded in indentured servitude has developed into an efficient state-regulated temporary foreign labour regime designed to regularize wages and "keep foreign workers segregated in low-wage industries" (Hahamovitch, 2003, p. 93). Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, these types of programs, also known as 'guestworker' programs have become more and more entrenched in immigration policies globally (Castles, 2006; Ruhs, 2005). Today's global 'guestworkers' are considered voluntary migrant labourers, who are thought to have more in common with the indentured servants of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than they do with slaves (Hahamovitch, 2003). These workers, "expecting to return, cash in hand... sign up for dirty, dangerous, or difficult work abroad, though they may not know where on the spectrum between slavery and freedom they will end up" (p. 72). However, the primary difference between indentured servants of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and guest workers of today is that unlike indentured servants, who were largely expected to stay in the host country permanently, guest workers, by definition, are expected to leave once their contracts are terminated. Thus, this new category offered "employers foreign workers who could still be bound like indentured servants but who could also be disciplined by the threat of deportation" (p. 73). Canada is indeed no exception to this global trend. The continual and indeed increased use and exploitation of guest worker programs in Canada reveals a continual fascination with managed temporary labour migration in low-skilled industries to this very day.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the structure of just one of these programs: the SAWP, a temporary foreign guest worker program that is often considered indispensable to Canada's agriculture industry (Basok, 2002).

In 1966 Canada entered into a bi-lateral migrant farm labour agreement with Jamaica, and in that year 264 Jamaican guest workers came to the province of Ontario to harvest tobacco (Basok, 2002). In the years since the SAWP has grown significantly. The program later included several other Caribbean states and British Overseas Territories, including: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. In 1974, the SAWP added Mexico to the list of participating countries, and Guatemala has been participating since 2003. Administered by Employment and Social Development Canada<sup>iv</sup>, the program is now active in eight out of 10 Canadian provinces. Ontario still receives the lion's share of workers, mostly in the agricultural regions of Southwestern Ontario, primarily in the Niagara Region, Norfolk County and Essex County. While the Government of Canada does not keep statistics on the number of SAWP workers who enter the country, this number may be gathered by calculating the number of temporary foreign positions in positive Labour Market Opinions (LMOs) accepted by Employment and Social Development Canada in the following sectors: nursery and greenhouse workers, general farm workers and harvesting labourers (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013b). According to these government statistics, in 2012 there were a total of 38,590 migrant farm workers in Canada, the bulk of which were in Ontario (20,560 workers), followed by Quebec (13,780) and British Columbia (5,390). While most of these workers will have entered through the SAWP, there will have been some who entered through the newer agricultural stream of Canada's low-skilled temporary foreign workers program that was introduced in January of 2011 (Hennebry, 2012)<sup>v</sup>. These workers can be from any country<sup>vi</sup>.

### **Precarious Citizenship and the Limited Rights of Migrant Farm Workers in Canada: A Brief Overview**

The structure of the SAWP ensures that the exclusion of migrant farm workers from fully participating in Canadian society occurs in several ways (Nakache, 2013). Generally speaking, as non-citizens, migrant farm workers do not have the mobility rights guaranteed Canadian citizens under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This means workers do not have the ability to

quit and find work elsewhere, as they do not have the right to work within free employment relationships. Unless a transfer is arranged with the employer's permission, workers are required to remain with their government-approved employers for the entirety of their contract, which is usually for about six to eight months. SAWP workers are thus bound to their employers as their access to work in Canada hinges on this singular employment relationship. Many workers inexorably find themselves in thorny employment situations while in Canada: however, SAWP repatriation provisions are such that any worker who raises concerns to their employer risks being repatriated to his or her home country. Under the SAWP repatriation rules, "workers can [be] and are sent home by their employer, often with just a day or two's notice, for any reason", including when workers become sick or injured (United Food and Commercial Workers, 2007, p. 9). No provision is made for appeal. Non-citizenship, lack of employment mobility and strict repatriation provisions ensure that workers do not readily have access to formal avenues for addressing issues such as workplace harassment, statutory employment standards abuses or health and safety rights. For example, the repatriation of migrant farm workers due to illness or injury has been thoroughly documented in recent research conducted by Hennebry and McLaughlin (Hennebry & McLaughlin, 2012; McLaughlin & Hennebry, 2013; McLaughlin, 2009).

This situation facilitates the production of an agricultural workforce which is perceived by employers to be above all docile and deferent. Indeed, Basok (2002) highlights Mexican workers' perceived docility as an integral feature of their attractiveness to Canadian employers, especially in comparison to local Canadian workers. In the words of Basok, unlike "local workers, [migrant workers] are willing to accept minimum wages for work that is back-breaking, monotonous, and detrimental to their health" (p. 107). She quotes a grower who claims that Mexicans "don't talk back. They don't tell you what you can do with yourself. A lot of the Canadians will tell you, 'You can just shove it'" (as cited in Basok, 2002, p. 110). Basok says: "while some Mexican workers may complain to their friends... most nevertheless accept these conditions until they are sent back home" (pp. 110-111). She argues that the constraints to workers' ability and willingness to make complaints, such as Ontario workers' inability to legally join a union<sup>vii</sup>, ensure that workers remain compliant. Basok argues that the fear of deportation, blacklisting from the program<sup>viii</sup>, and an unwillingness on the part of Mexican consular officials to interfere when workers face problems at work are the most obvious constraints to migrant worker

resistance. Harald Bauder (2006) provides a similar observation when he comments that migrant agricultural workers in Canada are “relatively unprotected by labor legislation and work under constant threat of being expelled from the program and consequently deported from Canada... and especially at risk if they resist substandard working and housing conditions or engage in political activism” (p. 159). Workers’ inability or at the very least unwillingness to raise workplace concerns with employers, ministry of labour officials, or consular officials also results in their having limited access to the provincially legislated statutory employment standards to which they are in fact entitled, for example in Ontario this includes the Ontario Health and Safety Act and some basic provisions included in the Ontario Employment Standards Act. Exacerbating an already precarious situation, these constraints to speaking out against precarious workplace conditions occur within a larger political context in which a number of provincial jurisdictions, such as Ontario and British Columbia, are becoming increasingly reliant on workers’ self-enforcement of employment standards rights (Gellatly et al., 2011).

SAWP workers are not entitled to apply for permanent residency at any time, either while they are under contract to Canadian employers or once their contracts have been terminated. As they are considered to be ‘low-skilled’, SAWP participants are rendered permanently temporary and do not have the option of ever filing for permanent residency in Canada (Hennebry, 2012; Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). As a result, migrant farm workers do not have access to settlement services, such as settlement counselling or language instruction for newcomers. Additionally, though participants are required to provide proof that they have dependent family members to whom they regularly send remittances, migrant farm workers are forbidden from sponsoring their families while they are working in Canada (Preibisch & Santamaria-Hermoso, 2006). Even though rates of return among SAWP workers are very high, and some workers have been returning every year for up to 25 years (Hennebry, 2012), workers are not entitled to federal welfare programs (Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). For example, while migrant farm workers make payments into federal Employment Insurance just like Canadian workers, they are unable to access employment insurance benefits as the SAWP employer-specific work permit restricts participants from being available for work for other employers once their contract is terminated, a necessary stipulation for receiving benefits (Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010, pp. 19-21). Finally, in a potential breach of Canada’s federal human rights legislation, Canadian employers are able to select foreign migrant farm employees on the basis of both nationality and sex (Preibisch &

Encalada-Grez, 2010). The restriction of rights listed here exacerbates an already precarious employment situation and leaves migrant farm workers even more vulnerable to workplace abuses than Canadian workers in similarly precarious employment arrangements, as reported in the Fall 2009 Auditor General's report (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2009).

It must be stressed that all of the constraints to workers' rights listed here hinge on workers' lack of formal access to Canadian citizenship (Goldring, Berinstein, & Bernhard, 2009; Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Nakache, 2013; Sharma, 2006, 2012). As a way of highlighting the connection between formal citizenship constraints and precarious forms of employment arrangements among migrant workers in Canada, in several recent publications, sociologist Luin Goldring and colleagues introduce the idea of a precarious citizenship status that is determined by the rights and entitlements that people have in any given national context. They chose the term 'precarious' in order to highlight the connection between citizenship statuses to the growing phenomenon of precarious labour globally, and in Canada in particular (Landolt & Goldring, 2013; Vosko, 2006). In this way, forms of precarious citizenship status such as 'temporary foreign worker' can be tied directly to the flexibilization of the labour market (Fudge & MacFail, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Pun (2005) makes a similar observation in the context of China, where rural migrant labourers in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are not entitled to full citizenship. She states that the Chinese Hukou system, which restricts rural workers' access to urban citizenship<sup>ix</sup>, in tandem with authoritarian processes of labour control form a modality of power that "makes up the ambiguous identity of the rural migrant labour and deepens, but at the same time obscures their exploitation" (p. 46). It is unquestionable that the issues of political membership and a precarious citizenship status are vital to understanding the marginality of and precarious conditions faced by migrant workers in receiving nations (or in the case of China's urban SEZs), and as such should be framed as crucial issues related to global justice, decent work and human rights (Goldring et al., 2009). In the following section I will introduce Michel Foucault's concepts of bio-politics and disciplinary power (Foucault, 1978, 1997/2003) as well as Judith Butler's concept of 'petty sovereigns' (Butler, 2004) and David Theo Goldberg's discussion of the privatization of race (Goldberg, 2009) in order to extend the discussion of how the Canadian state and Canadian employers, through the mobilization of non-citizenship status for temporary foreign workers, both deepens and obscures the exploitation of a racialized group of so-called 'low-skilled' and racialized agricultural workers from Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean.

### Stranger Fetishism as State of Exception

Sara Ahmed (2000) argues that the discourse of statist multiculturalism can produce a contradictory process of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of a nation's internal 'others'. Ahmed is overtly making reference to forms of statist multiculturalism such as that which gained currency in Canada under the leadership of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in the 1970s and which resulted in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act which was enacted by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1988. According to Ahmed's analysis, the adoption of the formal recognition of national multiculturalism may promote a kind of 'stranger fetishism' whereby there comes to be a differentiation between "those strangers whose appearance of difference can be claimed by the nation, and those stranger strangers who may yet be expelled, whose difference may be dangerous to the well-being of even the most heterogenous of nations" (p. 97). As a way of providing an overall conceptual lens through which my research may be understood, it is my position that the SAWP is an articulation of 'stranger fetishism' in the form of an official exclusion of migrant farm workers. I am referring here to the concept of formal exclusion in the sense that has been developed by Giorgio Agamben (2005), who describes a 'state of exception' as a state of legalized lawlessness that is a response to a situation of a political crisis and which justifies that which "appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form" (p. 1). As new immigration policies of the 1960s and 1970s rejected overtly racist policies (Thobani, 2007), the Canadian government was compelled to provide a legal exception for the inclusion of foreign non-preferred groups to continue to perform non-preferred jobs on a permanently temporary basis (Sharma, 2006). Sharma (2006) describes how this situation led to the creation the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program in 1973 and of a new class of worker who was transnational, temporary, 'non-Canadian' and unfree (Sharma, 2006, 2012). She reveals that the Canadian government, bound to grant, in the words of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, "freedom of choice for *citizens* [italics added] to work where they want" (as cited in Sharma, 2006, p. 98), developed a category of worker who was a non-citizen: foreign and temporary, with no legal entitlement to benefits permitted to Canadian citizens. Through her dissection of parliamentary debates at the time, the work of Sharma in particular reveals how state officials were acutely aware of the need to create a legislated yet ambiguous zone where migrant farm workers are *legally* disenfranchised and *legally* denied citizenship rights in the interest of producing a flexible labour force in low-skilled industries, such as agriculture. As a result, these

workers have been and continue to be exposed to an elevated risk of abuse and exploitation (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2009).

The creation of the SAWP is a good example of how law or government policy can be harnessed as a state-level instrument designed to control a given population, in this case transnational migrant farm workers from Mexico and the Caribbean. In the words of Judith Butler, from her book *Precarious Life* (2004), the law “itself is either suspended, or regarded as an instrument that the state may use in the service of constraining and monitoring” a given population (Butler, 2004, p. 54). This aligns with discussions of how current forms of governmentality are fundamentally raced and promote “rigid exclusions from national citizenship and civic participation” (Giroux, 2004, p. xxiv), ultimately producing racialized bodies (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010) who become over-represented in low-wage and precarious work (Galabuzi, 2006). By legislating the restriction of rights and freedoms to a permanently revolving door of temporary non-citizens through the mechanism of a ‘low-skilled’ guest worker program the Canadian state is participating in what Foucault may describe as the bio-political regulation of foreign nationals.

### **Controlling the Flow of Migrant Bodies: Non-Citizenship and Bio-Power**

The structure of the SAWP is such that any examination of the production and reproduction of individual migrant bodies and subjectivities must begin with an exploration of how this very population of bodies is produced and manipulated at the wider scale of Canada’s temporary foreign labour regime. In his work, Foucault examines the shift in political power since the fall of European monarchies. He argues that one of the main characteristics of sovereign power prior to the modern period was the right of the monarch to threaten and condemn subjects to death (Foucault, 1978), often in public displays of excessive violence (Foucault, 1977/1995). Foucault observed a shift in the operation of power since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Once grounded in the sovereign’s right of death, Foucault has examined a reversal in the operation of power, which now operates through the “right of the social body to ensure, maintain or develop its life” (1978, p. 136). Foucault marks this shift as a profound transformation in the operation of power in modern society. No longer concerned with the continued “juridical existence of sovereignty”, contemporary forms of power are now “situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (p. 137). In the *History of Sexuality Volume*

I, Foucault describes this shift succinctly. He writes: “[o]ne might say that the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death” (p. 138). This “power over life” took on two distinct yet co-constitutive forms (p. 139): disciplinary power and bio-power. He describes disciplinary power as “a political anatomy of detail” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 139), which “centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). This form of power will be examined in more detail below. I will begin my discussion on power with an examination of bio-power in the context of the SAWP.

Bio-power is concerned with the regulation of entire populations, or the “species body”: “the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary” (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). For Foucault, this shift from sovereign power to disciplinary and bio-power power was crucial to the development of capitalism as “the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital cannot be separated” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 221) as capital requires the controlled insertion of available and docile bodies. Of this, he says:

The adjustment to the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. (Foucault, 1978, p. 141)

Contemporary operations of power, as described by Foucault, serve to optimize particular bodies and life in general in such a way that serves the needs of capital by facilitating workers’ governability both on an everyday scale (e.g. the shop floor) and on a larger societal scale (e.g. the labour market).

In his later writings, Foucault (1997/2003) examines the operation of bio-power in more detail. According to this position, as the primary function of the state towards its population is to preserve life, then it must be possible for the state to be granted the power to conduct violence against those that could put the health of the collective body at risk. He explains: “the death of

the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer” (1997/2003, p. 255). Indeed, recent conversations in the migration and citizenship literature discuss the role of a sustained temporary citizenship status in the context of balancing labour needs against the desire for national security (McNevin, 2011). McNevin, for example, in her book *Contesting Citizenship* says: “[s]chemes that carefully monitor the temporary flow of migrants to specific labor-market sectors for limited periods of time balance demand for labor with security concerns about underground status” (p. 57). She continues: “[i]f illegalization is one strategy of neoliberal governance then sustained temporary status is another” (p. 57). In the context of the SAWP, the need for flexible labour power and the desire for protecting the Canadian population merge with ideologies of racism in the regulation of global relationships between populations. It follows, then, that if we apply bio-power as a lens through which to view the SAWP, for example it seems to be no accident that the program has been organized according to racial hierarchies (Bolaria & Li, 1988; Satzewich, 1991; Preibisch & Binford, 2007) that reproduce and solidify colonial relations in spite of Canada’s removal of overt racism from immigration policy (Thobani, 2007). For Foucault, the maintenance and administration of bio-power ensures that “security mechanisms... be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life” (Foucault, 1997/2003, p. 246). Foucault’s concept of bio-power is a uniquely useful tool for understanding how Canada’s SAWP facilitates the construction, manipulation and control of migrant bodies. All this in the service of maintaining the health of the Canadian populace in the face of a shortage of “cheapened and politically subjugated labour power” (Sharma 2006, p. 108) constructed as a political crisis of considerable urgency (Solberg, 2007, p. 1; Tilson, 2009, p. 2) in the Canadian agricultural sector.

To understand how SAWP workers may be perceived as a threat to the health of the nation, it is instructive to understand some common narratives that are applied to these workers as revealed in the extant SAWP literature. In his book *Racism and the Incorporation of Foreign Labour*, Satzewich (1991) presents a history of foreign farm labour that incorporates an analysis of the beginning of the SAWP. He examines the role that racism played in the structural establishment of Canada’s first temporary foreign labour program. He describes a process whereby Caribbean workers were defined as a ‘race’ apart from the dominant ‘white’ Canadian population whose

presence in the country would pose serious problems. This attitude was clearly articulated in 1947 by the then Director of the Immigration Branch:

The admission to Canada of natives of the West Indies has always been a problem with this Service and we are continually being asked to make a provision for the admissions of these people. They are, of course not assimilable and generally speaking, the climatic conditions of Canada are not favourable for them. (as cited in Satzewich, 1991, p. 172)

This “ideology of racism,” Satzewich writes, “structured the decision to exclude these people from entry to the country and subsequently to allocate them to positions as unfree migrant labour” (p. 171). Hence, from the very beginning, migrant farm workers have been, in the words of American race theorist David Theo Goldberg, “demarcated to strangers and exploitable labour” (Goldberg, 2009, p. 42). The program later incorporated Mexican workers whose numbers have been increasing and now surpass the numbers of workers from the Caribbean (Binford, 2002). Binford (2002) argues that the decision to include Mexican workers in the mix was racially motivated, as farmers were complaining that their Caribbean workers were demanding time off, worked slowly, and refused to work long hours. Binford associates Caribbean workers’ willingness and capacity to resist exploitation to their ability to speak English and to their history of pre- and post-slavery relations with White Europeans, “which may translate into different expectations regarding treatment and different styles of handling labor demands and authority relations” (Binford, 2002, p. 10). More recently, Binford argues that SAWP employers actively exploit biological and cultural differences in order to maximize labour productivity (Binford, 2013, p. 95). He says that differential racialization, which is grounded in and entails “sets of beliefs and practices that circulate in rural communities” shapes “employers’ recruitment strategies and employer-employee relations and contribute to reproduce and even intensify divisions among source country migrant workers” (p. 95). Mexican workers, for example, who speak Spanish (or in many cases one of many languages indigenous to Mexico), and do not have the same history with strict racial categories, were seen by farmers as more docile and hence easier to exploit (Binford, 2002, p. 10). The addition of Mexican workers and the subsequent replacement of Caribbean workers based on stereotypes related to their ethnic heritage (Preibisch & Binford, 2007) highlight how ethnicity and race are themselves social constructions and a

“means by which people are organized in relation to the productive and political processes of society in Canada” (Ng, 1981, p. 97). More recently, this phenomenon has been described as the transferable and elastic nature of the very concept of ‘race’ (Goldberg, 2009). The manipulation of ethnic categories for purposes of human resource management and labour productivity on farms reveals how these have been produced and reproduced to serve Canadian agricultural production.

While it may be no longer acceptable to publicly endorse overtly racist representations of migrant farm workers in political or social debate, recent research by Bauder (2008) reveals that such narratives do indeed permeate the social imagination and serve to legitimate the ongoing ‘othering’ of migrant agricultural workers. Indeed, in his research on the discourses that serve to legitimate both the social exclusion of migrant farm workers and the existing labour practices employed in the context of the SAWP, Bauder (2008) reveals a contradictory set of narratives. While it is recognized that workers perform an integral economic function, they are often portrayed as a ‘social problem’. In his study, which examined the portrayal of workers in mainstream media accounts taken from media outlets throughout Southern Ontario between 1997 and 2002, he found that migrant farm workers are often portrayed as ‘criminals’ in local newspaper stories. He found that workers, when referred to at all, are most frequently mentioned in relation to “accidents, rowdiness and crime” (Bauder, 2008, p. 110). Even when the media denounces explicit forms of racism such as racist attacks against workers, newspaper stories tend to do so by highlighting workers’ economic value to the local economy, rather than in defence of their human rights (p. 112). The work of Satzewich (1991) and Bauder (2008), among others (Bolaria & Li, 1988; Preibisch & Binford, 2007; Walia, 2010) provide ample evidence to conclude that racism continues to deliver legitimacy to the bio-political control and social exclusion of Canada’s migrant farm worker population through the permanent condition of temporariness made operational through the mechanism of the SAWP.

Limiting the rights of migrant farm workers as described in detail above are key elements in the bio-political control of migrant agricultural workers on a societal level, or at the level of population control. I will now explore how the suspension of workers’ rights on a societal level may indeed serve to bolster the sovereign power of employers and state officials in more banal everyday settings, resulting in workers’ everyday experiences of state-level control being of a

much more intimate nature. Foucault discusses the intimate invasions of bio-power when he claims that the regulation of populations gives rise to "... infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations, to an entire micro-power concerned with the body" (Foucault, 1978, pp. 145-146). This key insight from Foucault opens a window to understanding how the Canadian state's desire to control the flow of global migrant worker populations through policy is performed in daily life through tightly regimented strategies of managing both the migration process and the labour process. In the following section I will explore how everyday iterations of bio-power are expressed within the context of the SAWP. These, I argue are expressed in two distinct, yet related ways: a) through reinforcing forms of sovereign power in workers' everyday interactions with minor state officials and employers and b) through the process of redirecting the accountability of state-sanctioned violence from the state to particular individuals.

### **'Petty Sovereigns' and Privatized Discrimination**

In her writing about indefinite detentions, Judith Butler discusses how sovereign power re-emerges "with a vengeance of an anachronism which refuses to die" in so-called 'emergency conditions' such as states of exception, described above (Butler, 2004, p. 54). In this context, she describes sovereign power as a form of discretionary power that is heightened when the rule of law is suspended. So when human rights are limited, such as they are for workers who participate in Canada's SAWP<sup>x</sup>, forms of sovereign or discretionary power may become intensified. She says: "... the fact that managerial officials decide who will be detained indefinitely, and who will be reviewed for the possibility of a trial with questionable legitimacy, suggests that a parallel exercise of illegitimate decision is exercised within the field of governmentality" (p. 54). Butler's analysis is illuminating when considering Canada's SAWP. One consequence of state policies which limit the rights of migrant farm workers in the interests of agricultural capital is that more sovereign power may be allocated to low-level state managerial actors, such as ministry of labour or consular officials, and of course to the individual agricultural employers who sponsor, hire and house workers. Indeed, some SAWP scholarship has identified the relationships that SAWP develop between workers and such figures as growers and program and consular bureaucrats (Sawchuk & Kempf, 2008). Sawchuk and Kempf (2008) refer to this aspect of worker experience as a multi-dimensional form of learning that is can indeed result in some cross-cultural benefit, but which is more often than not conflictual (p. 498). Butler is keen to

point out that in the context of a state of exception, it is not the case that managerial or bureaucratic actors, whom she refers to as ‘petty sovereigns’ themselves suspend the rule of law, but rather “the rule of law, in the act of being suspended, produces sovereignty *in its action and as its effect*” (p. 60). The near despotic forms of control that are employed in the management of migrant farm workers by their employers and state officials in the context of the SAWP are therefore not the reserve of a few ‘bad apples’, but are rather the consequence of labour migration policies that create precarious living and working conditions for workers (Hennebry, 2010; McLaughlin & Hennebry, 2010) *and* through which the sovereign power of certain individuals is swollen. Perhaps the most obvious example is how SAWP repatriation rules provide individual employers with the discretionary power to decide who is able to stay in the country and who must be deported, revealing how the state and employers collude in the public enforcement of private laws<sup>xi</sup>. This discretionary power is further enabled by consular officials who, when conflicts arise between workers and their employers, have a tendency to take the side of the employer (Basok, 2002; Vosko, 2013).

As I have mentioned above, in the case of the SAWP, an increase in the sovereign power of individual agents of state and capital interests over a racialized and precarious non-citizen workforce occurs within the context of Canada’s policy of official multiculturalism. Indeed, the experiences of migrant farm workers and the political history of temporary foreign worker programs in Canada provide some evidence to the effect that multiculturalism in Canada serves to support what Bannerji (2000) and Thobani (2007) refer to as a process of nation building grounded in racist ideology. When seen through the lens of the SAWP, state-level multiculturalism seems to operate as a state-level discursive device which promotes ethnic plurality and cultural tolerance while simultaneously concealing the state’s continued and historical involvement in the production and oppression of racialized bodies (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007). Like Goldberg (2009), I argue that this concealment facilitates a process of redirecting the accountability of institutionalized racism from the state to individuals (p. 362). Thus, the treatment of racialized migrant workers through the SAWP is maintained by veiling the violence embedded in the program through the transfer of structurally sanctioned racism to the realm of workplaces, dormitories and employers’ individual practices of controlling labour power. The bio-political control of the SAWP workforce, which is grounded in racist ideology (Satzewich, 1991) is thus “crucified in public only to be born again in private” (Goldberg, 2009,

p. 360). Any occurrences of abuse are relegated to the domain of individual employer/employee relations or to the actions of a few bigoted townsfolk.

To illustrate, it is particularly instructive to bring attention to recent federal and provincial state-level discussions around intervening in or regulating individual workplaces within Canada's temporary foreign worker programs: in particular the 2009 federal Auditor General's investigations and 2009 Ontario parliamentary debates on the protection of foreign workers. The Fall 2009 Auditor General's report investigated the risk of exploitation and abuse of migrant agricultural workers in Canada. Authorities from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Human Resources and Service Development Canada (HRSDC) expressed to the authors of this report that they had no authority to conduct compliance reviews of employers who had not consented to a review. The report implies that growers' cannot be forced to participate in state sanctioned workplace inspections or investigations (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2009). The everyday forms of exploitation and abuse of migrant farm workers by employers can thus occur uninterrupted and under the radar of state regulators and inspectors. Ontario provincial parliamentary debates which took place in 2009 around the proposed Ontario Bill 210 (Employment Protection Act for Foreign Nationals 2009) are similarly informative. Much of the conversation at the time dealt with the protection of Ontario's live-in caregivers from what parliamentarians considered 'rogue' employment recruiters, who were often referred to as 'bad' or 'rotten apples'. However, no mention is made of how Canada's temporary foreign worker programs themselves facilitate the abuse sustained by live-in caregivers, who are relegated to live in the homes of their employers. Any worker abuse is thus isolated to the privacy of employers' homes and employees' workplaces. Throughout these debates, members of all political parties were very careful not to question the right of Canadian families to hire foreign workers in the interest of the continued health and well-being of Canadian families. More to the point, the government of the day expressed a deep unwillingness to track employers through a government registry, claiming, in the words of Liberal MPP Vic Dhillon, that such a registry would "not be in line with Ontario's Open for Business initiative" (Dhillon, 2009, p. M-265). Similarly, much attention was paid, particularly by Progressive Conservative MPP Randy Hillier, to how the pro-active enforcement of employment standards legislation by Ontario's Ministry of Labour, in the context of temporary foreign worker programs would constitute the warrantless entry of ministry officials onto employers' private homes, which of course in the case of the live-

in caregiver program, also serve as employees' workplaces<sup>xii</sup>. On this, Hillier states: "we cannot denigrate and dismiss our Constitution because of one individual" (Hillier, 2009, p. 8162).

Hillier goes on to call abuse against workers by their employers the action of one-in-a-thousand employers, this in direct contradiction to the experiences of abuse and violence as related by live-in caregivers themselves (Arat-Koc, 2001). State regulators' inability to force employers to comply with inspections and parliamentarians' unwillingness to consider legislation that would shed light on employer practices serve to maintain a culture of labour exploitation and abuse which may remain hidden from the public realm.

If we consider recent insights by Goldberg (2009), this situation of hiding socially sanctioned violence from public scrutiny can be understood as an integral feature of the present form of global capitalism. In his words: "civil society and the civilities on which it is built displace race and the warrant of its exclusions from state practice to privatized and individualized expression" (p. 52). As a result, the relationships that develop between migrant workers and their employers are a vital factor in shaping the everyday constraints and freedoms that workers experience while in Canada. Further evidence of this is provided by Preibisch (2007) and Sawchuk & Kempf (2008), who have shown through interviews with workers themselves that the success of the SAWP relies heavily on the relationships that employers develop with their workers. Preibisch explains how any instances of racism or abuse are often not perceived by workers as symptomatic of systemic problems, but are rather seen as the unfortunate transgressions of a few individual employers. Preibisch (2007) further discusses how racism is both materialized and made to disappear in the relationships that develop in rural Ontario between workers, their employers, and local community members. She documents how local Canadians go out of their way to avoid social contact with workers and even how some farmers have been shown to conceal workers' housing behind packing sheds so as not to bother their neighbours. One resident commented on how farmers are "very careful to keep the housing for the offshores out of sight because the neighbours will complain" (as cited in Preibisch, 2007, pp. 21-22). The racism that Satzewich (1991) and others (Bolaria & Li, 1988) argue is embedded in the very notion of a guest worker program is thus rendered civil, and the epistemic violence associated with essentializing racial prejudices and the material violence connected to the everyday exploitation of migrant labour can thus remain hidden. Goldberg (2009) describes this phenomenon as the positioning of socially sanctioned violence out of sight.

The heightened sovereign power that is enabled in SAWP employer/migrant worker relations becomes further evident through employee hiring practices, work assessment and rehiring practices. Before being admitted into the program, all worker candidates are subject to two physical examinations: the first a routine medical check conducted by a Ministry approved physician in the candidate's country of origin, and the second a routine physical examination conducted by a Ministry official. As workers are required to have agricultural work experience in lieu of formal education (Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, 2014), Ministry officials typically inspect candidates' bodies for the tell-tale signs of a life devoted to work in the fields, such as calluses and tan-lines. This is a residual practice from the slave trade, when slaves for sale would be physically examined by potential owners. This is indeed a practice which has continued in historical and contemporary global iterations of guestworker programs, such as the H2 program in the United States that imported Jamaican cane cutters in the 1950s and 1960s (Hahamovitch, 2003). Workers in this program reported that recruiters "checked their teeth, felt their muscles in their arms and back, turned over their hands to look for the calluses on their palms that signaled familiarity with hard, manual work, and looked for signs of injury and disease" (p. 71). With regards to rehiring practices, in the case of migrant farm workers from Mexico for example, employers are requested by the Mexican Ministry of Labour to provide a report on each worker at the end of each season (Basok, 2002). These reports are given to the worker in a sealed envelope and are to be handed in to Ministry officials on their return to Mexico. If the employer claims that the worker has been lazy, or that he or she does not get along well with fellow workers, for example, there is a good chance that that worker will be punished by the Ministry. Punishment usually comes in the form of not being approved to participate in the program the following season (Basok, 2002, p. 120), or more recently, in the form of blacklisting indefinitely from the program (Vosko, 2013). As mentioned above, workers consequently go out of their way to be perceived by their employers as obedient, friendly, hard-working, strong and healthy in order to ensure their continuation in the program. As I shall examine in more detail below, this behaviour is not confined to the workplace, as workers' behaviour is subject to continual forms of employer control, especially in employer-provided dormitories, or bunkhouses.

The increased sovereign power of state officials and employers and the deflection of state-sanctioned discrimination and social exclusion away from the domain of state policies encourage

hidden and privatized methods of organizing racialized working-class bodies in Canada, as is evidenced through the policies and practices associated with the SAWP. Goldberg (2009) describes such a process as racism becoming conceptually stigmatized “so that obviously the bigoted – extreme individuals – get to qualify... Racism is reduced... to *invoking* race, not to its debilitating structural effects or to the legacy of its ongoing unfair impacts” (p. 360). However, far from racism against migrant farm workers being an isolated problem associated with the odd employer, colonial attitudes towards race and the reproduction of low-skilled labour are embedded in the very notion of Canada’s agricultural guest worker program (Satzewich, 1991), as is evidenced from the historical snapshot at the beginning of this chapter. The SAWP is an ongoing relic from a haunting past; the dubious legacy of pre-multicultural, overtly racist immigration practices whose roots can be found in the colonial practices of slavery and indentured servitude (Bolaria & Li, 1988, pp. 185-205). Indeed, a glance at the work of Ann Stoler (1995, 2006) offers a reminder of how what is now referred to as neoliberal racism or the privatization of race (Giroux, 2004; Goldberg, 2009; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010) sounds eerily similar to how colonial relations were produced in the banal everydayness of intimate life in more overt colonial contexts. Stoler says: “[t]he politics of intimacy is where colonial regimes of truth were imposed, worked around, and worked out” (Stoler, 2006, p. 36). In this way, forms of employer and state-official control that invade the intimate spheres of migrant workers’ lives are as central to the daily survival of the SAWP as is any other condition of its continual reproduction, such as the need for cheap labour and a flexible workforce (see Memmi, 1965, p. 70).

### **The Distribution of the Sensible: Placing Migrant Bodies in the Home/Workplace**

The SAWP contract stipulates that employers must provide housing to their workers (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013a). In the case of field operations, such as vineyards, orchards and field vegetables, employer-provided housing is most often located on employers’ properties and takes the form of single-sex, single-ethnicity dormitories that are comprised of communal rooms for sleeping, cooking and bathing. In the case of greenhouse operations, these dormitories are often physically attached to the worksite itself, as a built addition to the greenhouses or warehouses where employees work. Altha Cravey (1998), who has studied internally migratory maquiladora workers in Northern Mexico, has articulated how the intimate environment of the dormitory topples the binary of the public and the private as

“workplace, household, and community relationships collapse into one geographical site” (p. 101). Consequently, even “the smallest details of life are regulated” (p. 101). Housing provisions which are incorporated into the SAWP contract provide the same spatial collapse of private and public spheres as described by Cravey. The state and employer forms of discipline and control that I have thus far discussed consequently permeate all forms of social interaction and daily social reproduction that workers undertake, whether in the workplace or at home, as these cannot be separated. For SAWP workers, the simplest, most banal processes of daily social reproduction, what Katz (2001) refers to as the “fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” (p. 711) occur within the realm of the agricultural production unit and fall within the scrutiny and control of employers, and by extension state officials such as consular and Ministry of Labour officials. Activities such as cooking, laundry, communicating with family members and even the forging of friendships among workers and socializing in their off-time more often than not occur on company property. In this section I forge an understanding of the consequences this arrangement may have on workers’ embodied experiences of control and discipline. I begin by discussing Foucault’s examination of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1980, 1977/1995) as set against Jacques Rancière’s notion of the distribution of the sensible (Jacques Rancière, 1999, 2004) before reviewing some of the literature on the living-at-work arrangement.

When attempting to understand workplace discipline and control, the work of Foucault is yet again useful as a starting point (Knights, 1990; Knights & Willmott, 1989), particularly his discussion on the production of ‘docile bodies’ in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1977/1995). Foucault describes disciplinary power as a “political anatomy of detail” (p. 139), or a “modest, suspicious power” (p. 170) that operates through individual bodies. Foucault describes a docile body as one that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (p. 136) and provides the example of the 17<sup>th</sup> century soldier who is constructed and transformed into a pliable body through which “a calculated constraint runs through it” (p. 135) whereby a “subtle coercion” operates at “an infinitesimal power over the active body” (p. 137). Foucault provides this example to illustrate how a docile body is produced through a calculated manipulation of the body’s individual elements: its gestures and its behaviours (p. 138) in such a way as to create an effective machine out of individual bodies (p. 164). Foucault’s elaboration of disciplinary power helps to elucidate the forms of managerial discipline and control that may be enacted when the

sovereign power of employers and state-officials is increased, as I have argued may be the case with the SAWP. He says:

The meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body will soon provide, in the context of the school, the barracks, the hospital or the workshop... an economic or technical rationality for this mystical calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite. (p. 140)

The disciplinary system described by Foucault could be understood as providing the overall context in which a worker's daily tasks take place, and in the context of the SAWP, may frame the context in which workers' bodies come into daily contact with their employers in the workplace, with each other in the dormitories and with the objects of agricultural production. The meticulous attention to managerial detail that an increase in sovereign power may facilitate could work to ensure the formation of embodied work habits which are as equally attentive to detail and efficiency. In the words of Foucault: "A well-disciplined body forms the operational context of the slightest gesture" (p. 152). With regards to the production of industrial bodies, disciplinary power serves as a productive force, moulding "the body of the worker to fit the production process" and conversely in developing "industrial processes that could exploit the passification and subjectification of the workers' body" (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 57).

While the present study is certainly indebted to this work, and to a Foucauldian analysis of power and surveillance in the workplace, it is also my view that the process of tethering of the workplace to the bunkhouse requires a view of power and control that is perhaps slightly more constraining than the one offered by Foucault. Contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière offers a conception of bodily control that differs from Foucault's notion of disciplinary power – a notion of control that I argue can capture an understanding of agency and subjectivity while not betraying the significance of constraining forces. More than a subtle process of producing efficient and docile individual bodies through training and monitoring, Rancière articulates a notion of control that is more about governing "the very appearance of visibility and sayability upon which circuits of disciplinary power are drawn, bodies controlled, borders demarked, and so on" (Lewis, 2012, p. 61). While an understanding of disciplinary power may

illuminate the process of developing docile workers through oftentimes despotic managerial processes, Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible may be useful in further elucidating how the living-at-work arrangement in particular is a system of governance in which these managerial practices may effectively take place.

Rancière discusses how the first order of the police is to create

an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task: it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not... (Rancière, 1999, p. 29)

It is my position that the construction, discipline and control of migrant bodies as undertaken by the state and employers through the mechanism of the SAWP perform the same distributive function described here by Rancière as the first order of the police. In no place is this more palpable than in the SAWP living-at-work arrangement. Governing workers' bodies by suturing the home to the workplace ensures that individual workers' bodies are indeed assigned a particular place and a particular task from which workers are expected not to deviate. This arrangement distributes workers' bodies in such a way that bolsters both efficient agricultural production and the exclusion of non-desired populations from integrating into Canadian communities. This is reminiscent of a sentiment expressed elsewhere by Pierre Bourdieu, who claims that "[c]apital makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance at the same time that it brings closer desirable persons and things" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 127). The SAWP living-at-work arrangement transcends practices of disciplinary power associated with the rise of the enclosed workplace as described by Foucault (1977/1995) in which individual workers were brought together in a single place of work so they could be more easily observed. The dormitory system employed in the SAWP guarantees that workers are subject to the gaze of employers, state officials and indeed their fellow workers in nearly all aspects of their public and private lives. To a degree, this panoptic arrangement ensures that workers do not transgress their collectively assigned and indeed singular role as 'workers'.

While the living-at-work arrangement has been studied in depth by feminist sociologists and geographers in relation to gender and mobility in the context of Canada's live-in caregiver

program (Arat-Koc, 2006; Bakan & Stasiulis, 2012; Pratt, 2004; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005), it has not been granted the same depth of analysis in research on the SAWP. That said, SAWP workers' housing conditions *are* a recurring theme in the literature (Basok, 2002; Preibisch, 2007; Tomic, Trumper, & Aguiar, 2010). The Canadian migrant justice activist group, Justicia for Migrant Workers, has provided some of the most in-depth descriptions of housing conditions for migrant workers. For example, in their 2007 report on housing for SAWP workers in British Columbia (Justicia for Migrant Workers B.C., 2007), the group reveals the results of over three years of informally inspecting housing conditions that they say range from the “moderately adequate... to grossly unsuitable conditions...” (p. 2). Reporting on housing conditions is an important endeavour in understanding and responding to health and safety risks faced by migrant farm workers on an everyday scale. However, I argue that the living-at-work arrangement is about more than the provision of cheap housing for workers; rather housing provision is a central mechanism through which the state and the employer may facilitate the effective control of the SAWP labour process.

Their confinement in the workplace/dormitory throughout the duration of their contracts ensures workers' limited mobility on an everyday scale (Basok, 2002, pp. 106-128). The dual process of citizenship restrictions and housing provisions provide an effective mechanism for controlling both the agricultural labour market and the labour process in agricultural workplaces (Perry & Reid-Musson, 2011)<sup>xiii</sup>. By alienating temporary foreign workers from their social and political contexts, the SAWP effectively magnifies the alienation of labour from workers by the “spatial separation of the site of purchase and expenditure of labor from the sites of its reproduction” (Kearney, 1995, p. 59). Thus, workers' capacity to consent to the employer's use of workers' labour-power is reduced and makes possible despotic forms of managerial control that may otherwise be largely ineffective (Burawoy, 1979, 1985). The living-at-work arrangement is not unique to systems of temporary labour migration or indentured servitude. As is noted by Smith (2003), the development of large-scale factory systems in industrial societies such as the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom relied on creating human resource management arrangements that engendered workplace fidelity. Often these arrangements included recreational programs, adult education programs and the provision of family housing. In the context of welfare work programs in the United States and elsewhere in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the provision of workers' accommodation and other extra-curricular activities was intended to

facilitate a protracted and loyal relationship between employers and their employees. This was grounded in the belief that “voluntary efforts by employers to improve the lot of the workman encouraged individual self-betterment, loyalty, and cooperation – that they inspired the employee to become a better person and a better worker” (Nelson, 1996, p. 101). In the context of welfare work schema, it was thought that corporate efforts such as housing provision for workers provided an insurance policy for employers against worker unrest and labour organizing and provided a cost-efficient way of ensuring the social reproduction of labour power by encouraging company loyalty over generations of workers (Nelson, 1996; Tone, 1997).

In contrast to housing provisions in the context of welfare work arrangements, the use of dormitories in temporary labour migration arrangements performs a somewhat different function. The purpose of dormitories in these contexts is to “attach single workers for short term capture” (Smith, 2003, p. 334). Migrant workers are “not expected to mature their working lives within the firm” and thus dormitories are not meant to facilitate the development of long-term relationships between workers and their employers” (Pun & Smith 2010, p. 232). Worker dormitories in the context of global capitalism rather operate as a tool to maximize the control of temporary labour (Cravey, 1998; Pun, 2009). The wide-scale use of dormitories as a mechanism of controlling and disciplining migrant workers is clearly demonstrated through the work of ethnographer Pun Ngai (Pun & Smith, 2007, 2010; Pun, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012). In her ethnographic work with women workers at an electronics factory in the Special Economic Zone of Shenzhen in China’s southern province of Guangdong, Pun describes a labour regime that is as equally reliant on housing as a technology for controlling the labour process as is Canada’s SAWP. Pun describes a system in which rural migrants entering cities are housed in dormitories located within factory compounds (Pun, 2009). In her work she uncovers a large-scale dormitory system that subsidizes the living cost of labour and “makes cheap workers available for production for the global market” (Pun 2007, 255). In her own work and work she has conducted with business scholar Chris Smith, Pun has used the term ‘dormitory labour regime’ to capture the hybrid structure of this particular technology: that the use of dormitories is the result of both the rise of the transnational corporate workplace in China as well as the residue of state socialist housing registration policies that restrict rural migrants from permanently settling in cities (the Hukou system referenced above) (Pun 2009). Similar to Canada’s SAWP arrangement, Pun describes an employment arrangement in which workers have no access to a home which is

separate from the workplace. The dormitory labour system she describes exerts greater control into the working and non-working lives of workers, for example by allowing employers the ability to stretch the workday to respond to product demand, often to its physical limits (Pun 2007, p. 246). Pun's work in China provides a useful lens through which to explore Canada's SAWP.

Pun makes clear how the dormitory operates as a human resource technology designed to maximize workplace discipline by extending the invisible reach of employee management from the workplace to the intimate spaces of workers' homes and private relationships. She makes the crucial point that "control and the daily reproduction of labour power rests with the factory since accommodation, food, travel, social, and leisure pursuits all occur within a production unit" and that employers have direct control over the labour process by relying on a system of "labour discipline that imposes penalties on workers not only in the workplace but also in the dormitory" (2007, p. 247). Pun reports that employers in China actively impose dormitory regulations having to do with things like eating and bathing – each regulation associated with a corresponding workplace punishment. In Pun's research, managers openly talked about these measures as having to do with workplace discipline and control. For Peck, the making of workers is a complex process (1996). He claims that, once they are hired,

workers must be prepared to cooperate in the workplace by being willing participants in production... As a result, social relations in the workplace... involve negotiating a fragile balance between control and consent: managerial despotism is rarely the best way to secure *and reproduce* a productive work force. (pp. 23-24)

Achieving an appropriate balance between worker consent and labour control in the employment relationship is a political process that requires negotiation within processes of both labour market and labour control (Burawoy, 1979, 1985; Peck, 1996). I have attempted to demonstrate above that this process of negotiation in the context of the SAWP takes place between states who control the migration process/citizenship status of migrant workers and employers whose discretionary powers in the workplace are increased. Pun argues that this type of disciplinary control could not be possible where there is a separation between work and home, and thus

dormitory techniques of power are “central to the extraction of labor from workers” (2007, p. 252). In the living-at-work arrangement embedded within the SAWP, housing provision moves away from its more traditional realm of social reproduction and into the realm of the labour process as a technology that maximizes both industrial production and the exploitation of labour-power. Indeed, as Pratt (2004) has observed in the context of Canada’s live-in caregiver program, the living-at-work arrangement reveals a striking paradox inherent in Canada’s low-skilled labour migration policies, namely migrant workers’ simultaneous experience of global mobility and local immobility, the contradiction of “long range migration(s) and daily experiences of social constraint” (pp. 6-7).

### **Embodied Experiences of Employment within Canada’s SAWP**

My examination of power and control in the SAWP raises the question of how global inequality is produced and reproduced at the level of workers’ bodies in their daily routines of work, friendship and the mundane tasks of social reproduction as they take place in intimate, everyday environments, such as workplaces and dormitories. As I have mentioned above, Stoler’s analysis of the politics of intimacy in colonial settings provides a useful frame for understanding how everyday forms of discipline and control are performed within the SAWP. The idea of colonial relations being produced and reproduced in intimate spaces through interpersonal interactions provides an avenue to exploring in more detail how discipline and control permeate the everyday embodied experiences of migrant farm workers. In particular this section will introduce Bourdieu’s notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) along with other relevant formulations of the body and the intimate (Freeman, 2001; Harvey, 2000; Mountz & Hyndman, 2006; Pratt & Rosner, 2012; Wildon, 2012; Wolkowitz, 2006) in order to examine the way in which migrant workers’ bodies become a ‘battleground’ through which “productive and political processes” (Ng, 1981, p. 97) take place, and how the living-at-work arrangement embedded in the SAWP facilitates the infiltration of bio-politics and colonial relations into workers’ embodied experiences of work and employment.

There is a growing literature that examines how the global is expressed through the intimate and vice versa (Mountz & Hyndman, 2006, p. 447). Mountz & Hyndman (2006) argue that the “intimate is inextricable from the global”, and that together they constitute places such as the border, the home and the body (p. 448). They argue that the body is “the finest scale of political

and economic space, that analyses drawing on multiple scales including the body and the global represent a way out of narrowly economic globalization discourses” (p. 451). And “the scale of the body... allows one to explore global processes as intimate phenomena” (p. 451). In a recent collection of articles on the relationship between the local and the global, editors Pratt and Rosner (2012) provide the following description of intimacy: “[i]ntimacy does not reside solely in the private sphere; it is infused with worldliness. Nor is it purely personal: intimacy takes on specific political, social and cultural meanings in different contexts” (p. 3). Similarly, Mountz & Hyndman (2006) describe the intimate as “embodied social relations that include mobility, emotion, materiality, belonging and alienation. The intimate encompasses not only those entanglements rooted in the everyday, but also the subtlety of their interconnectedness to everyday intimacies in other places and times...” (p. 447). Largely situated in feminist debates, much of this literature focuses on developing a gendered and embodied understanding of capitalism and globalization as a way of challenging, in the words of Carla Freeman (2001)

the very constitution of that macropicture such that procedures, consumers, and bystanders of globalization are not generic bodies or invisible practitioners of labor and desire but are situated within social and economic processes and cultural meanings that are central to globalization itself . (p. 1010)

David Harvey explores how the body and the global political economy are inextricably linked (Harvey, 2000, pp. 97-117). He argues that the human body is a “battleground” within which and around which political economic forces are continuously at play (p. 117). He says: “[i]f the circulation of variable capital as a whole is about the reproduction of the working class in general, then the question of its biological and social reproduction must be posed in ways that acknowledge such complexities” (Harvey, 2000, pp. 114-115). Mountz & Hyndman (2006), in their discussion of how processes of the global political economy are performed and experienced in intimate spaces, offer a similar observation to Harvey’s. In their work, they discuss how the state is not only performed along international borders but also “in daily life, through the construction of identities of citizens, noncitizens, and ‘partial’ citizens. Borders are reproduced and inscribed on the body in daily life where the state influences the body in the most intimate and far-reaching of ways...” (p. 452). Migrant subjectivities, as colonial subjectivities before

them, are thus produced in relation to complex historical and political processes in banal, everyday intimacies (Memmi, 1965; Stoler, 2006).

While my discussion of the SAWP above as presented through the lens of bio-power, sovereign power, and disciplinary power certainly does plant the focus on power as it runs through workers' bodies, Foucault's iterations of power may not be sufficient for understanding how these social structures are enacted during workers' routine everyday social interactions (Wolkowitz, 2006). While Foucault does indeed emphasize that "there are no relations of power without resistances" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142), an overwhelming focus on power and control in a political context that I have to a certain extent described above as 'exceptional', may risk undermining the potential and importance of worker agency, and workers' daily experiences of resistance and resilience. As a way of addressing this potential limitation, it is productive before moving on to engage more directly with Bourdieu, particularly with his concept of 'habitus'.

In his book *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu describes habitus as a system "of durable, transposable dispositions" that are "determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production..." (p. 72). He goes on to describe these conditions as "... the material conditions of existence characteristic of class condition" that are "constitutive of a certain type of environment" (p. 72). Bourdieu describes habitus as an "intentionless" and "regulated" improvisation, a set of unconscious and collective practices that are environmentally determined, that embody social structures and which are brought together in every social interaction (p. 81). Interpersonal relationships, according to Bourdieu are never just about individual-to-individual relations. Rather,

[e]very confrontation between agents in fact brings together..., systems of dispositions... and, through these habitus, all the objective structures of which they are the product, structures which are active only when embodied in a competence acquired in the course of a particular history... (p. 81)

Key to understanding how habitus is embodied is how it is learned, as "practical mastery is transmitted in practice," and not through theory (p. 87). In other words, the practices and dispositions that make up habitus are learned by individuals by unconsciously imitating the actions of others. In this way, habitus, and by extension the social structures embedded within it,

are unconsciously produced and reproduced through everyday interpersonal interactions. For Bourdieu, the intimate space of the home is the principal site in which this process takes place, and where habitus primarily develops. This insight is particularly germane given my above analysis of how migrant bodies are distributed in the context of the living-at-work arrangement embedded in the SAWP. The spatial organization of the home/workplace not only distributes workers according to their predetermined places and tasks, this structure is embodied and permeates every social interaction through the production and reproduction of habitus in the workplace and the bunkhouse. As I shall discuss in more detail below, the production and reproduction of worker habitus in the context of the SAWP, while pervasive, is far from complete, and indeed may indicate a collective understanding, conscious or not, of how to survive life in the program. As I shall demonstrate, small or even not so small breaches in habitus, such as the one illustrated in Alberto's story that I shared in the introduction are not so uncommon, and yet are more often than not met with disdain and contempt by fellow workers. In other words, while a certain collective production of habitus may develop among workers, as I shall discuss below, individual forms of agency do emerge in the SAWP that may represent opportunities for resisting its formation.

That said, a focus on the intimate and the body through the concept of habitus may help to elucidate how individual SAWP workers themselves, through their everyday interactions, even ones that are embedded in social relations, are indeed social and political bodies, and not just docile or captive labourers. While migrant worker agency is embedded in a network of social and political controls, workers do indeed perform acts of agency that can both resist and support systems of domination. While recent scholarship has begun to assess migrant workers' forms of resistance, both informal (Brasch, 2013; Preibisch & Encalada-Grez, 2010) and formal (Chaudry & Thomas, 2013; Fortier, 2013; Preibisch & Raper, 2007; Preibisch, 2007b), scholars have often dismissed SAWP worker agency as either having little impact on workers' lives or as unsustainable given the enormous constraints to workers' freedoms (Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2006). I argue that a deeper understanding of migrant worker agency is necessary to developing an understanding of how embodied experiences of migration and employment produce unique migrant subjectivities. For example, recent research from the UK on migrant agricultural workers' everyday lives suggests that acts of individual or small group agency, though perhaps limited to producing incremental or short-term changes in conditions, "can be significant to workers

themselves both materially and in relation to the subjective experience of employment” (Rogaly, 2009, p. 1976). Hidden or covert responses to uneven social relations may correspond to migrants’ “hope and striving for a better life” (Rogaly, 2009, p. 1978). Indeed, Italian political philosopher Sandro Mezzadra discusses how migrant subjectivity is a product of mass migrations of people in the present era of global capitalism. In their dialogue “Né qui, né altrove” (Italian for ‘neither here, nor there’), Mezzadra and Neilson (2003) draw attention to global migrant subjectivities that develop *within* the very processes that are designed to control the political agency and mobility of migrants and which are emblematic of indentured labour regimes. In their words, “if... global capitalism gives rise to new forms of flexibility, then the continuous movements of migrants shows the subjective face of this flexibility” (p. 19). These authors go so far as to argue that people’s decisions to migrate pose a challenge to the formal order of states, in the sense that migratory movements are themselves a social and political practice that places pressure on the borders of national citizenship (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2003).

If we follow through with this position, migrant workers’ decisions to migrate, as well as the needs and desires that contribute to those decisions must have serious social and political consequences. In the case of migrant farm workers in Canada, it is well established that the primary reason workers decide to migrate is tied to the economic well-being of their families. Worker migrants, especially those who have participated in the SAWP for many years, are surely aware of and are prepared to accept the negative consequences associated with participating in the program. The decision to migrate and migrant workers’ subsequent trajectory of migration and marginalization produce individual and collective experiences of mistreatment, abuse, survival and resistance that gesture toward the development of new migrant identities and subjectivities. This is a political development Michel de Certeau (1988) may help to elucidate. He says: “the fragmentation of the social fabric today lends a *political* dimension to the problem of the subject” (p. xxiv). The development of a migrant worker subject demands an analysis of migrant workers’ everyday desires, actions and decision-making processes, and the political significance of these, if any.

Addressing the body as it moves through intimate spaces and interacts with others opens a window to addressing workers’ agency and subjectivity, as habitus provides an understanding of worker bodies’ “location within the wider context of class and other social relations” (Wolkowitz,

2006, p. 61). In the words of Wolkowitz (2006): “Bourdieu both points to the existence of a more autonomous, class-based, embodied habitus than the ‘docile body’... but also recognizes that the evolution of embodied practices is constrained by their relation to the exigencies of the social field” (p. 60-61). Indeed, a discussion of habitus provides a fuller foundation on which to understand how social relations are embodied and enacted in the intimate spaces and everyday interactions that occur among migrant farm workers who participate in the SAWP. Focusing on workers’ actions in local settings can facilitate an evocative portrayal of workers as themselves agents of global forces, and not just passive victims (Freeman, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided a detailed portrayal of Canada’s SAWP through the lenses of power and control. Through both a historical and sociological analysis, I have developed the argument that colonial relations made manifest through current policies and practices that restrict migrant workers’ social and mobility rights shape the current iterations of Canada’s temporary foreign worker program, the SAWP in particular. The chapter ends with a reflection on workers’ embodied experiences of colonial relations within the SAWP, and how these may shape workers’ subjective responses to their respective workplace and living situations. In the following chapter, I introduce a comprehensive theoretical framework with which to undertake an analysis of SAWP workers’ everyday practices of accommodation, opposition and survival.

My intention in this chapter has not been to draw a direct policy link between present-day guest worker programs in Canada and previous forms of unfree labour, such as indentured servitude and slavery. Neither has it been my intention to make the claim that this historical narrative is the one and only overarching story in the development of Canada’s guest worker program, both in terms of global and local historical processes. For example, Sawchuk & Kempf (2008, 2009) have underscored how the SAWP is an artefact of globalisation and uneven global development, and particularly to Canada’s explicit involvement in the deepening of poverty in Mexico. An example on a more local scale is provided by Reid-Musson (2014) who has recently put forward an historical analysis that reveals how the rise of managed migration programs such as the SAWP also reflects state and employer collusion to displace a more mobile and disruptive ‘transient’ agricultural work force from Quebec and Atlantic Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, however, I have reminded readers of Canada’s history of slavery and indentured

servitude in order to explore in more detail how racist and sexist attitudes tend to permeate labour market policy as it intersects with immigration policy, and how these are grounded in the national experience of racism in the Canadian context. As such, I argue that an analysis of work and international migration cannot and should not be separated from the wider discussion of race and gender dynamics as they are produced and take place in a social and political context which is invariably shaped by the ongoing experience of colonialism and its legacies. In this way, my historicizing of the SAWP advances the discussion of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program as presented by the scholars addressed in this chapter. Specifically, I challenge scholars of temporary foreign labour migration to consider the production of a precariously situated migrant workforce in low-skilled jobs through intensive forms of state and employer surveillance as an ongoing vestige of a racist and colonial history. As such, intensive forms of labour control, such as restrictive housing provisions at the margins of Canada's labour market must be understood as not only the product of global forces but also as historically situated in local contexts. My view is that this is an integral element that shapes the intimate sphere of workplace relations for SAWP workers, and provides a new avenue for examining workers' social lives in context – and for drawing a connection between workers' everyday experiences of agency and control to wider attitudes toward those workers considered to be a permanently temporary class of 'strangers'.

### **Chapter 3: Agency, Performance, Rupture: A Theoretical Framework**

“It is the worker, with his own hands, who has the most control” (Jorge). This is an assertion that was made by Jorge, one of my research participants. At first glance, this may seem to be a surprising statement given the previous chapter’s characterization of Canada’s SAWP. However, in this account it can be surmised that Jorge, a greenhouse worker from Mexico, was attempting to convey how, at the micro-level of the workplace, workers should not be thought of as mere victims of oppression and exploitation. On the contrary, workers are active participants in both maintaining and resisting technologies of control and surveillance as discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, a primary focus on power, control and oppression in the SAWP may risk overemphasizing “the passivity and powerlessness of the worker, as well as the dominating power of the employer” (Constable, 1997, p. 8). Constable, in her work with Filipina maids in Hong Kong has warned against presenting workers in such a way that “neglects or even conceals... coexisting and competing forms of power” (p. 8). When Jorge made this statement, he was talking about how the ways in which workers control their bodies in the workplace is tightly bound to the success of the agricultural enterprise. Jorge’s reference to “his own hands” amplifies the corporality of workers’ experiences in the SAWP. That he also says that workers have ‘control’ presumes a certain level of agency among workers. It assumes that despite enormous constraints, SAWP workers are not just powerless victims, but rather workers make decisions on a daily basis that do have an influence on the ways in which participation in the program is experienced. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide an overall frame through which to view my data analysis chapters. As shall be examined in more detail in the following methodology chapter, the themes explored in the following pages have emerged from the analysis of interviews, workshops and participant observation. While this chapter brings together a set of concepts that allows for an in-depth conceptual understanding of my findings, they are concepts that are not normally combined into a single entity. As such, I have felt the need to devote an entire theoretical framework chapter in order to provide as clear and concise a conceptual structure as possible before delving into an examination of my research participants’ words and actions. By and large, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical frame for understanding the ways in which migrant workers negotiate the delicate balance between pragmatic acceptance and overt resistance in the dormitory/workplace, as well as some insights into how these may influence approaches to pedagogy and community work with migrant

workers. To be clear, the reason why I have chosen to pepper this theoretical framework chapter with so many seemingly opposing and conflicting ideas, is because this not only seemed warranted, but felt necessary given the complex social lives of my research participants. If I am to adequately capture the often contradictory social worlds of SAWP workers I need to engage with an almost kaleidoscopic frame that can capture the complexities of workers' daily lives. In other words, I felt the need to erect a structure, however rickety it may seem, from which I could adequately examine both the seeming normalcy of work as it is experienced by workers themselves as well as the countless idiosyncrasies that break with this 'norm'. This meant engaging with ideas that could account for workers' daily experiences of individual agency *and* collective rituals, survival *and* resistance, accommodation *and* opposition, as well as camaraderie *and* antagonism. In short, this chapter marries an otherwise motley crew of concepts; concepts that I argue provide some guidance in understanding the complex social lives and contradictory subjectivities that develop on the fringes of Canada's labour market.

In this chapter I will offer a theoretical groundwork that I will use in order to address the following two questions: a) how is the distribution of workers' bodies as described in the previous chapter maintained and resisted at the level of workers' interactions in everyday encounters?, and b) what does it mean to engage in emancipatory pedagogy with migrant workers? While not veering from the overall focus on control, discipline and embodied knowledge, this chapter will focus on three main concepts: agency and subjectivity, performance and rupture. My exploration of the concept of agency will focus on the literature on labour agency with a particular focus on migrant worker agency. Specifically, this discussion will centre on the ways that the scholarly literature has addressed the issues of deference and resistance, primarily on an individual or everyday scale among migrant workers in different international contexts. This brief introduction of how the concept of agency has been employed in migrant labour scholarship will help to frame my discussion of both performance and rupture in the context of Canada's SAWP. In general, performance here refers to the performance of subject positions, such as 'worker' that are considered acceptable for SAWP workers. In particular, the concept of performance is explored in relation to everyday dormitory or bunkhouse relations as they exist in the context of the SAWP. To date, the significant influence that bunkhouse relations may have on workers' decisions to either perform or subvert accepted roles in the dormitory/workplace is an area that has not been explored in the migrant worker scholarship in

Canada. The final idea explored in this chapter is that of rupture. The concept of rupture is meant to highlight how the performance of prescribed ways of being associated with living and working within Canada's SAWP may be challenged by workers, and how this offer insights into developing critical and emancipatory labour education. Workers' everyday lives may offer opportunities for splintering that could suggest avenues for migrant workers to experiment with alternative subject positions. Finally, through the concept of rupture as developed by Jacques Rancière I examine the implications for an emancipatory pedagogy relevant to working with migrant workers that is grounded in aesthetics and the subversion of the commonly accepted norms of social interaction.

### **Agency and Subjectivity**

Agency and subjectivity are notions that have been examined in the more classic labour process literature (Burawoy, 1979; Knights, 1990; Willmott, 1990; Knights & Willmott, 1989; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992). Burawoy in particular (1979), in critiquing twentieth century Marxism, presents strong empirical evidence to support the thesis that industrial workers in the context of the factory shop floor should not be reduced to mere "objects of manipulation" (p. 77). Burawoy challenges the notion of the worker as "subjectless subject" and instead stresses how "ubiquitous resistance" structures workers' everyday lives and thus produces a complex worker subject – and integrally, one that is central to the sustained triumph of industrial capitalism (p. 77). For Burawoy, the traditional Marxist dualist interpretation of structure and agency is insufficient for understanding the complexities and paradoxes of capitalist production as it fails to acknowledge the function of social relations and practices. Rather, Burawoy discusses how worker agency, identity and subject formation, or in other words, the social relations that imbue the moment of production are crucial elements in the success and survival of industrial production. Workers' active pursuit of survival and a sense of dignity through achieving high levels of productivity ensure that the labour process on the shop floor produces a sense of choice and independence among workers. In this way, Burawoy effectively examines the role that workers themselves play in the ongoing production of labour exploitation. To be precise, in his highly influential ethnographic work, outlined in his book *Manufacturing Consent* (1979) Burawoy found that an increase in labour production coincides with "the expansion of the area of 'self-organization' of workers as they pursue their daily activities" (p. 72). He found that examining workers' organization of shop-floor activities could account for rising levels of productivity independent

of managerial control. For example, workers' desire to increase their pay through piecework provided individuals with a sense of freedom and of bodily mastery over the labour process in such a way they were arguably "rendered impotent to question its rules" (Knights & Willmotts, 1989, p. 551). In recognizing the desires and intentionality of workers, Burawoy's analysis has largely framed the discussion of labour agency, providing empirical evidence to show how the daily decisions and actions that workers make on a daily basis play a crucial role in the production of global capital (p. 73). Thus, the effect of worker interests cannot be reduced to an analysis of class structures. On the contrary, worker subjectivity develops on the shop floor and is constituted through the everyday practices related to the labour process.

Burawoy inspired a wide range of literature in the field of industrial sociology, and for my purposes I will briefly touch on literature that explored a particular interest in developing an understanding of power and subjectivity in the context of the workplace. Following Burawoy and borrowing largely from Foucault, there developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s a faction of Industrial Sociology that effectively argued that the behaviour of industrial workers "is not simply or exclusively determined by the forces of capitalist production and exploitation" (Knights, 1990, p. 329). Much of this literature focused on incorporating an overt focus on the significance of subject and identity for understanding both the reproduction and transformation of social relations, particularly in the context of the labour process as it occurs at the point of production (Knights & Willmott, 1989). In the words of Knights (1990), these authors took the analysis of the labour process toward an understanding of agency and subjectivity that could "readily encompass an understanding of consent as much as resistance, gender and race as well as class, and market forces at the same time as relations at the point of production" (p. 298). The significance of this literature has been to recognize how there is great emancipatory potential in understanding how freedom and worker intentionality can shape the labour process in spite of disciplinary mechanisms on the shop floor (Knights & Willmott, 1989). As I shall examine in more detail below, in the context of the SAWP, workers do explore intentionality and bodily mastery in some areas of work where they seem to have a modicum of control – such as piecework. On the other hand, in areas of work where there is less opportunity for agency – such as in waged work dominated by repetitive actions, workers may incorporate a certain micro-mastery of the labour process at a more unconscious level. In either case, subjectivity and social

relations are key factors in developing an understanding of agency and control in the context of the SAWP.

The remainder of this section will examine more recent, largely feminist accounts of how agency is performed and subjectivity is produced in the workplace, first by examining the particular gender dimensions of the labour process in industrial contexts and next by focusing on the parts of this literature that examines the control of workers specifically through the blurring home and the workplace. I will first briefly touch on how gender is an integral element in the development of worker agency and subjectivity, an element of worker experience that has been examined in some detail in the labour process and globalization literature (Ong, 1987; Mirchandani, 2012; Pun, 2005; Salzinger, 2003; West, 1990). In her book *Genders in Production*, Salzinger (2003) examines through ethnographic research how the production of gender in the labour process is intimately connected to the manufacturing of consent (Burawoy, 1979) on the factory shop floor. Her work is particularly useful in understanding the embodied and intimate experiences of SAWP workers, as she is concerned about how workers are produced through the labour process, and consequently how gender is at work in the production of workers. Salzinger offers intriguing insights into the ways in which workers are interpellated toward specific gender categories at work. As I shall examine in more detail below, the production of gender, and masculinity in particular, is a strong organizing element in how relationships are textured in the intimate spaces of the SAWP. Similar to the way I have argued that racist stereotypes can and do shape SAWP workers' experiences of work and migration, Salzinger argues that global and transnational production is structured through gendered assumptions. Similarly to feminist ethnographers such as Ong (1987) and Pun (2005), Salzinger highlights women's presence in global manufacturing. Of these studies, Salzinger's analysis of the labour process dynamics of Maquila factories in Northern Mexico is particularly useful to the present study, as she examines how masculinity is produced through conflict and competition in the context of a factory that hires both men and women workers – an arrangement which, as I shall discuss below, is similar to that of Canada's SAWP. For Salzinger, as for Burawoy (1979) before her, interpellation is an integral element of workplace control. This is a concept that these authors have borrowed from Althusser (1971), who argued that subjects are constituted and identities are forged through social relations. Unlike Burawoy (1979) and Althusser (1971) for whom subjects came to be within the context of a single determined discursive structure, Salzinger's approach to subject formation is more flexible,

in the sense that multiple interpellations may occur simultaneously and thus may produce multiple subjectivities that can be contradictory in such a way that may make both consent and resistance possible (Salzinger, p. 176). In this way, she follows the lead of such labour process theorists above who argued that a richer understanding of subjectivity and identity production was crucial to understanding power relations as they occur in the moment of production.

In the context of a mixed-gendered factory floor, Salzinger (2003) examines how workers are made into gendered and productive subjects, and highlights how the labour process engenders competition and conflict between workers. She observed how inter-personal conflict between workers became a key ingredient in the gendered production of a workforce comprised of what she refers to “masculinized super-producers” (p. 116). A hyper competitive workplace served to steer workers away from trusting relationships that could develop into collective action and solidarity, as all conflict tended to remain at the level of inter-worker relations on the shop floor. She says: “... the most significant impact of these confrontations is to make production a centre of attention within which work-focused masculinized subjects emerged” (p. 118). Salzinger thus observes that in the context of a mixed gendered Maquila both men and women workers were interpellated toward a hyper masculinized productive subject. She explains how masculinisation in this way became a central organizing element of the consent process – as conflict and struggle occurred on the “managerially defined terrain of production” (p. 118). In this way, the masculinisation of work ensured that workers remained “securely within the managerial frame” (p. 118). Thus, Salzinger approaches gender as an integral element of the labour process – and quite clearly as something which is created via the workplace. At the same time it must be noted that workers are certainly a part of a society outside of the workplace that frame them in certain ways with regards to hegemonic gender norms, such as male breadwinner and female homemaker/caregiver. To a certain extent, these norms both clash and are reinforced by the demands of both everyday social reproduction and industrial production in the SAWP. As I shall examine through the narratives of workers themselves below, gender is thus key to understanding the development of individual subjectivity and identity in the context of the SAWP. As such, gender, along with colonial attitudes towards race and the limits to formal citizenship as experienced by SAWP workers as examined in the previous chapter, are key influences on the collective social dynamics at play among my research participants.

As stated above, the literature on labour agency suggests that there is an antagonism between the conflicting forces of workplace discipline and worker agency that shapes the development of working class subjectivities in precarious forms of employment. This antagonism has been articulated in a variety of ways, for example, as the manner through which workers are “both exerting power and simultaneously being dominated by it” (Constable, 1997, p. 210), or in the words of Rancière (1981/2012) “that ambiguous state hauled between the two poles of mastership and servitude” (p. 36). Pun (2005) describes this antagonism as the dialectic of discipline and freedom: the balance between domination and self-determination that shapes the subjective experience of employment for workers working in the most precarious forms of work. Pun Ngai’s recent work with migrant workers in China emphasizes how the everyday negotiation of discipline and autonomy is central to the formation of migrant working-class subjectivities (Chan & Pun, 2009; Pun, 2005, 2009, 2012). Central to Pun’s argument is the idea that class relations and worker subjectivity are born out of and mediated by workers’ embodied and everyday experiences of employment (Pun, 2005). Namely Pun discusses the formation of ‘Dagonmei’, a term that she uses to describe what she refers to as a new Chinese subaltern subject that “embodies the dual process of domination and resistance and is marked by various forms of collaboration, transgression, and defiance” (p. 15). Pun provides evidence from her experiences on the factory floor and employer-provided dormitories that collective participation in social movements is not always necessary in the formation of class consciousness. She says:

... class consciousness is also constituted through everyday practices that may be performed anytime and anywhere and as such could hardly be reduced to moments of collective class struggle... no class struggle does not mean that there is no consciousness and thus no class. (p. 27)

Pun argues that even though workers operate under enormous structural constraints, within those constraints, workers may be considered “tactical agents” (pp. 62-63) in negotiating their own lives.

Pun claims that the development of dagongmei marks the rise of a fluid working-class consciousness not tied to class struggle or social action. Given that my research is focused on developing a clearer understanding of the everyday experiences of migrant farm workers who are

not directly involved with either union or community organizing, this element of Pun's work is particularly germane. Indeed, Pun's work on working-class identity among migrant workers in China's Special Economic Zones is part of a collection of writers interested in identity, subject formation and practices of resistance among working-class groups who have little or no access to formal collective organizing (Agarwala, 2013; Groves & Chang, 1999; Mills, Thomas, & Mills, 2012; Ong, 1987, 1991; Rogaly, 2009). While not overtly attached to any collective social movement, the class of dagongmei is not by any means 'passive'. Pun's research provides an exploration of how everyday politics and resistance from below can develop counter-hegemonic identities that can and sometimes do facilitate collective action among migrant workers. Pun provides a powerful analysis of identity formation grounded in the specific practices of dagongmei on both the factory floor and in workers' dormitories; an identity that develops both in spite of and because of practices of violence and exploitation produced by global capitalism. She says:

The political techniques of control over rural bodies meet with the tremendous desire of Chinese peasants to liberate themselves from their long-segregated lives, and hence act as agents in changing their lives. Dagongmei, as a specifically Chinese subaltern, embodies the dual process of domination and resistance and is marked by various forms of collaboration, transgression, and defiance that together come to make up its complex dissident, and heterogeneous subjects. (p. 15)

Pun's analysis of the formation of a new working class subject in China has far reaching implications for the study of migrant worker identity and subjectivity elsewhere. Practices of resilience, such as the formation of kinship relations in employer-provided dormitories, may prove merely symbolic, or at best only capable of achieving incremental changes in conditions at everyday micro-scales. That notwithstanding, collective identity formation through social practices and everyday forms of agency in the workplace and in the dormitory may produce an intriguing process of individual and collective self-determination that belies systems of labour control and processes of labour commodification.

I use the term agency here as a concept that is meant to encapsulate the range of categories into which could fit individuals' responses to exploitative working conditions, "from unalloyed acceptance through almost magical reconfiguration to outright resistance" (Katz, 2004, p. 241). An examination of everyday forms of agency and resistance must play a central role in the development of an understanding of worker subjectivity in forms of employment that are marked by exceptional forms of discipline and control, such as the SAWP. In his book *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott (1985) provides an in-depth account of everyday forms of peasant resistance. He describes peasant resistance as a form of "passive noncompliance" (p. 31); an individualized variety of resistance that consists of very little collective organization and which tends to avoid direct confrontation with authority. Within this category of resistance he describes tactics such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (p. 28). These anonymous, largely non-protracted responses to authority represent for Scott the continuous struggle between the peasantry and "those who seek to extract labour... from them" (p. 28). Scott (1985) discusses the differences between what he calls 'onstage' (overt) and 'offstage' (covert) perceptions and ways of articulating experience. Referencing peasants' 'hidden transcript', or offstage perceptions and ways of articulating those to each other, is one way of determining how and in what ways subordinate groups accept or do not accept the established social order (p. 26). Scott argues that though everyday forms of insubordination do not outwardly contest formal hierarchies of power, these practices are often the only option for groups with few opportunities for improving their social status.

Without a collective form of organizing, resilience tends to take on an improvised quality. The practice of sharing stories and creating hidden transcripts can reveal both the constraints and opportunities to engage in acts of resilience and resistance. This form of improvisational agency is illustrated by de Certeau (1988), who discusses the individual agency of a pedestrian at street level who never fully follows the rigid grid of streets and the sidewalks as strategically developed by those in power. Rather, the 'walker' tactically negotiates his or her own route, unconsciously creating their own urban 'text', thus producing the city as they walk. De Certeau examines how in the act of engaging with urban spaces, possibilities are moved about while others are invented. These are also moved about while others are invented through improvisation. He says: "... the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order... on the other he

increases the number of possibilities... and prohibitions” (p. 98). Creating the hidden transcript can be seen as a way of unconsciously subverting local authority through destabilizing what de Certeau refers to as the “schema of the Panopticon” (p. 108).

Peasant forms of resistance, as described by Scott (1985), seek to take advantage of power relations as they exist in everyday life and not necessarily as instances of larger abstract processes, such as capitalism or systemic racism. Piven and Cloward (1979), in their examination of the anti-poverty movement in the United States, share a similar insight. They argue that “people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes, and it is the concrete experience that molds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets” (p. 20). The nature of everyday forms of resistance as responses toward forms of domination as they are experienced on the ground has also been examined in feminist literature, in particular by Ong (1987, 1991). She states: “Instead of opposing capital as an abstract entity, factory women’s daily struggles against corporate policies – over body discipline, pressures for high productivity, and surveillance – aim to push back the varied norms and forms of domination” (Ong, 1991, p. 291). Thus, everyday forms of worker agency and resistance, when they are disconnected from collective struggle and social movement must, as a matter of sheer survival, be grounded in workers’ concrete everyday lived experiences of employment, domination and struggle.

Critics of scholarship that focuses on everyday forms of resistance warn against conceptualizations of resistance that may tend to overly romanticize individualized forms of resistance (Groves & Chang, 1999; Katz, 2004). For Katz (2004), the forms of agency described in this literature would be better described as forms of daily survival, rather than as forms of resistance. She says that we “cannot understand oppositional practice or its possible effects if we consider every autonomous act to be an act of resistance” (p. 242). These practices, she claims “not only enable material and spiritual survival, but also the recuperation of dignity in a range of small transactions. This dignity... enables people to get by, to enter reciprocal relations, and to shore up their resources...” (p. 246). While these and other authors have examined how, in their quest for survival, workers may inadvertently contribute to the exploitative conditions under which they are oppressed (Burawoy, 1979), with survival there may also come a sense of dignity that can transgress the desire to overcome the exploitative conditions of global capitalism. In the

words of Constable (1997): “everyday forms of resistance are geared toward surviving the situation with their sense of dignity intact” (p. 206). Constable’s (1997) work with Filipina maids in Hong Kong is particularly sensitive to romanticized notions of resistance and a portrait of workers as “passive and oppressed victims” – both narratives she claims fail to capture workers’ lived experiences (p. 180). Constable claims that her research participants “on the whole, cannot be described either as passive pawns of exploitation or as subjects who successfully resist control and discipline” (p. 203). Chin (1998) discusses how everyday forms of resistance are not just about contesting material conditions, but also embody “contestations over the processes of identity construction, of which the symbolic and material dimensions of class are intertwined with gender, race-ethnicity, religion, and nationality” (p. 126). This logic aligns with Foucault’s (1980) understanding of resistance, whereby “resistance goes nowhere in particular, has no inherent attachments, and hails no particular vision... resistance is an effect of and reaction to power, not an arrogation of it” (Brown, 1995, p. 49). In particular, Constable’s research highlights how workers not only resist systems of domination, but often *choose* to comply for their own reasons, for example the desire to be treated with ‘empathy’ by employers instead of agitating for social change.

Presenting autonomous agency as an end in itself can thus result in the dubious depiction of workers as mere participants in their own oppression. That notwithstanding, it must be noted that even though personal and everyday forms of resistance may do little to alter the overall structural relationship, they may go a long way to providing a sense of satisfaction on a symbolic level, and may facilitate workers’ finding and developing their own voice, however faint this voice may appear. This is especially true for those workers, such as migrant farm workers in Ontario, who have no access to structures of formal collective organizing, such as unions, or even very little access to other forms of collective organizing, such as civil rights organizing or community unionism (Basok, 2009; Crawford & Ladd, 2003). Nevertheless, even though migrant workers’ individual agency may correspond with dignity and survival strategies, these may in fact result in a deeper vulnerability. In the words of Ahmed (2004), “... the very project of survival requires we take something other into our bodies. Survival makes us vulnerable in that it requires we let what is ‘not us’ in; to survive we open ourselves up, and we *keep the orifices of the body open*” (p. 83, emphasis in original). This vulnerability is especially pronounced for individual workers who resist or who articulate a desire to express themselves in their daily lives in such a way as to

contradict the subject position of worker. As I shall explore in more detail in the following section on performance, the SAWP living-at-work arrangement exacerbates this particular form of worker vulnerability as daily social interactions tend to influence workers' ability and willingness to resist and subvert the prescribed subject position of 'migrant farm worker'.

The following two sections of this chapter focus on the concepts of performance and rupture. My intention is to explore the relationship between these two concepts within the larger framework of worker agency, in particular as it relates to the dialectic of discipline and freedom as experienced by workers in their daily lives and described by Pun (2005) and others (Chin, 1998; Constable, 2007), above. These concepts are meant to assist in framing the experiences of Canada's migrant farm workers in their experimentation with subject positions other than that of 'worker'. My examination of these two concepts in the context of the SAWP is consistent with my position, articulated in the previous chapter, that worker agency must be understood as embodied experiences which take place in intimate places. The section on performance focuses on an aspect of the SAWP experience that has not been examined in detail elsewhere, either empirically or theoretically, namely how daily worker-to-worker interactions in the dormitory/workplace influence workers' willingness and ability to counteract widespread forms of control and domination common to the program. The section on rupture develops a theoretical frame for understanding how workers may interrupt and interrogate forms of workplace control grounded in colonial relations as examined in the previous chapter. This section concludes with a discussion on how the concept of rupture may influence the way in which practices of popular education and participatory art may facilitate workers' own subversion of accepted subject positions within the narrow field of the SAWP's distribution of the sensible.

## **Performance**

### **Bunkhouse Relations: A Dramaturgical and Embodied Analysis**

Both Chan and Pun (2009) and Smith and Pun (2006) have found that the living-at-work arrangement in industrial dormitories in Southern China has to a certain extent engendered group resistance and facilitated forms of informal collective organizing in spite of technologies of control similar to those employed in the SAWP. In their work they reveal how the proximity of living and working together may help workers to consolidate collective resources, such as familial and ethnic networks, in order to resist exploitative working and living conditions (Smith

& Pun, 2006). In the context of Canada's SAWP, however, forms of collective resistance have largely been spearheaded by outside groups, such as organized labour or community justice groups (Basok & Carasco, 2010; Basok, 2009; Encalada-Grez, 2006). As we have seen from the literature (Basok, 2002) the mobilization of collective forces in order to challenge managerial authoritarianism or exploitive employment and immigration laws and practices does not generally develop organically in the SAWP dormitory, or bunkhouse. As was discussed in the previous chapter, authors such as Basok (2002) and Bauder (2006) have argued that external constraints such as workers' legal inability to join a union in Ontario are so rigid that even everyday forms of individual resistance are difficult to maintain. In this section I will attempt to delve deeper into the configuration of bunkhouse relations and daily interactions between workers themselves as a way of developing a more nuanced understanding of how and why prescribed subject positions are (or are not) performed by workers on an everyday basis. This section will offer a theoretical framework for understanding how everyday interpersonal interactions in the SAWP dormitory may facilitate the performance of prescribed subject positions and counteract workers' motivations for subverting these performances. I recognize that this is somewhat of a departure from the previous examination of agency and subjectivity in the context of the SAWP workplace. However, I argue that in the context of the living-at-work arrangement, social relations develop in such a way that a more complex examination of performance in daily life is appropriate. In particular, I will incorporate a dramaturgical analysis, borrowed primarily from the work of Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), with input from Bourdieu (1977) as well as introduce the concept of *relajo* as developed by Mexican philosopher Jorge Portilla (2012).

In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) employs a dramaturgical approach to the study of everyday social encounters in which he places 'performance' in everyday life at the centre of identity formation. Goffman's concept of performance is not to be conflated with Judith Butler's more recent concept of performativity (Butler, 1993). For Butler, a person's agency does not factor into the transaction of becoming a subject. Performativity is not an act through which the subject brings her body into being. Rather, material bodies are the effect, and indeed the most productive effect, of the dynamic of power. The subject becomes a subject by virtue of "such a process of assuming a sex" in such a way that one cannot think of the body outside of the "materiality of that regulatory norm" (p. 2). In other words, for Butler,

performativity is not an act through which the subject brings her body or her identity into being. Performativity should instead be thought of as the “power of discourse to produce” bodies (p. 2). Unlike Butler’s concept of performativity, Goffman’s formulation of performance is intimately linked to personal agency in daily life. Rather than bodies coming to being through discourse, for Goffman, as for Bourdieu (discussed above), social identities are both embedded and enacted in everyday contexts and social norms (Wolkowitz, 2006).

Goffman explains how when individuals express themselves in interpersonal encounters in everyday spaces such as the workplace, they tend to incorporate commonly held social norms into their daily interactions. He says: “when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact than does his behaviour as a whole” (Goffman, 1959, p. 35). Goffman emphasizes this point by stating that often times everyday performances of the self tend to represent an ‘idealized’ view of commonly accepted social norms that “highlights the common official values of the society” (p. 35). Goffman places an emphasis on performance as the means through which identities are expressed. Crucially, like Bourdieu, Goffman stresses how these expressions are grounded in the social context within which they take place. Goffman’s position, understood through the prism of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, facilitates an understanding of identity formation which is embodied, embedded in social context, and which cannot be separated from interpersonal interactions. As I have established in the previous chapter, the bunkhouse labour regime ensures that SAWP workers are subject to a disciplinary gaze in nearly all aspects of their public and private lives. In the SAWP, workers are assigned a particular place and task from which they are expected not to deviate. As such, workers are less likely to stray from the norms as prescribed within the social context of the SAWP. If we apply a Goffmanesque understanding of everyday performances of self to this arrangement, we may develop a more nuanced understanding of both deferential and non-deferential behaviour in the workplace, in the bunkhouse and in the community.

The dramaturgical nature of performance in everyday life is particularly evident through an examination of a person’s work life. Goffman discusses how the performance of one’s work is often not just about completing tasks, but about dramatizing the performance of those tasks (Goffman, 1959). He talks about how workers will perform tasks in such a way that “makes an

effective showing” (p. 33). In other words, workers often approach work in such a way that will both incorporate and attempt to epitomize that which is expected both by the employer and by larger societal norms. The dramaturgical element in this interaction has less to do with carrying out a given task well and more about making “it apparent that that they are performing well” (p. 33). In this sense, workers’ deferential behaviour in the workplace may be seen as “an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community,” or in this case of the values which permeate the SAWP (p. 35). Workers’ personal histories of migration and work in the context of their participation in the SAWP necessarily shape their understandings of their role in Canadian society. Over time workers may learn to effectively perform these expectations in their daily interactions with employers, officials, co-workers and local Canadians. While migrant workers’ personal identities may incorporate many different aspects of their lives, for example, as parents and spouses, the performance of their public selves in almost every aspect of their lives while in Canada is primarily shaped by their experiences of what is expected of them as workers exclusively.

As has been suggested in the SAWP literature, the perception by employers that migrant farm workers are more deferent than Canadian workers is a crucial element in the continuation, success, and widespread use of guest worker programs in Canada (Basok, 2002). It follows that the performance of deference must be experienced by workers as a vital component of their daily lives. It is surprising therefore that the experience of *performing* deference in Canadian guest worker programs is under-analyzed in the literature, both empirically and theoretically. A dramaturgical and embodied approach to understanding workers’ everyday interactions may provide a lens through which to understand how these performances operate in the context of Canada’s SAWP. As Newby (1975) has noted, deference among workers is not just a form of behaviour or a set of attitudes, but rather must be understood as a form of social interaction: one which “occurs in situations involving the exercise of traditional authority” (p. 146). Appealing to Goffman’s interactional approach may therefore provide some uniquely relevant conceptual tools to help facilitate an analysis of how deference, and by extension subject positions associated with acceptable forms of social interaction in the workplace, may be performed in the SAWP.

For Goffman, such forms of social interaction have a tendency to be ‘over-communicated’ by workers through a process he calls ‘negative idealization’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 40). According to

Goffman, workers may have a tendency to downplay their status in their performances at work, or at least the perception of their own status in front of employers or other authority figures, such as consular or ministry officials. To illustrate, Goffman discusses the performance of slaves in the antebellum South in the presence of white authority figures. He says:

The ignorant, shiftless, happy-go-lucky manner which Negroes in the Southern states sometimes felt obliged to affect during interaction with whites illustrates how a performance can play up ideal values which accord to a performer a lower position than he covertly accepts for himself. (Goffman, 1959, p. 38)

In the context of Canada's SAWP, workers may have a tendency to perform the social norms that are expected, especially in front of employers, ministry and consular officials and perhaps even local community members. In particular, migrant farm workers may develop a collective capacity to perform in public the gestures and movements associated with a deferential subjectivity. Workers' deferential behaviour should not necessarily be conceived of as a sign of ignorance or false consciousness on the part of workers, however. Rather, empirical studies with migrant workers (Chin, 1998; Constable, 2007; Pun, 2005) and other working-class groups (Newby, 1977) have shown that deferential behaviour might instead be understood as the pragmatic acceptance, or 'accommodation', of social norms as experienced by workers in their daily lives, and thus an important mechanism for coping with a difficult situation. A dramaturgical and embodied analysis may go some of the way to demonstrating how the distribution of the sensible as described in the previous chapter may be enacted and reproduced on the everyday scale of SAWP workplaces and bunkhouses.

SAWP workers learn their place in Canadian society and learn to behave in accordance with conduct deemed appropriate to their social position. SAWP workers' performance of deference is thus not a natural consequence of their ethnic backgrounds, as is often the stated belief of employers (Basok, 2002; Preibisch & Binford, 2007; Preibisch, 2010), but rather is embedded in the power structures of the SAWP. On the process of learning society's acceptable rules of conduct it is worth quoting Goffman at length:

When an individual does move into a new position in society and obtains a new part to perform, he is not likely to be told in full detail how to conduct himself, nor will the facts

of his new situation press sufficiently on him from the start to determine his conduct without his further giving thought to it. Ordinarily he will be given only a few cues, hints, and stage directions, and it will be assumed that he already has in his repertoire a large number of bits and pieces of performances that will be required in the new setting. The individual will already have a fair idea of what modesty, deference, or righteous indignation looks like, and can make a pass at playing these bits when necessary. (Goffman, 1959, pp. 72-73)

Through relations with employers, fellow co-workers, state officials and local Canadians, SAWP workers eventually come to embody the broad frames within which they may improvise their ‘proper’ roles. It is thus through lived experience, trial and error, and inter-personal interactions that workers learn the conduct appropriate to the distribution of migrant bodies discussed in the previous chapter: “the order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying” (Rancière, 1999, p. 29). It is within this frame that workers develop daily practices that can only be accounted for in relation to the social conditions in which they were produced and learned (Bourdieu, 1977).

It stands to reason that among workers themselves there must be a commonly held form of expression, or habitus, which is produced in relation to the program’s particular allocation of the sensible. This may be described as a kind of intangible *style* of collective conduct, a set of “regulated improvisations” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78) which workers learn as a matter of navigating the complex structure of the SAWP. In this sense, the performance of deference should not be considered to be the recital of a precise script. Instead, through their participation in the program workers eventually develop an expertise in the use of a discrete vernacular of survival common to the group. In the words of Goffman, “What does seem to be required of the individual is that he learn enough pieces of expression to be able to ‘fill in’ and manage, more or less, any part that he is likely to be given” (Goffman, 1959, p. 73). He continues: “... the expressions and movements used do not come from a script but from command of an idiom, a command that is exercised from moment to moment with little calculation or forethought” (p. 74). That the idiom of the SAWP is learned so thoroughly as not to require much thought in its expression is a result of specific technologies of control and surveillance that establish a form of body discipline that facilitates the normalization of the set vernacular (Foucault, 1995). For example, the process of

self-monitoring that accompanies relentless workplace practices that specify “exact body posture” and that require “tedious repetition of the same finger, eye, and limb movements, often for hours on end...” ensures that workers gain complete fluency in the accepted guidelines of conduct (Ong, 1991, p. 290). Once a worker becomes proficient in the common vernacular of the program, the expected presentation of a deferential self becomes an embodied and implicit act, a daily improvisation composed of precise yet elusive movements and gestures meant to communicate not only deference, but also strength, fortitude, resilience and skill.

These daily improvisations that make up the performance of a worker’s self are not necessarily performed consciously, as “we all act better than we know how” (p. 74). Goffman here prefigures what Michael Polanyi (1967/1983) would later describe as tacit knowledge, knowledge that may be possible to act on but which we are “unable to express or even know that we know” (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2005, p. 186). So while workers may be aware of everyday forms of domination that govern their everyday lives, they may be less aware of their active participation in their “standard maintaining routines” (Goffman, 1959, p. 75). For Bourdieu, the tacit or implicit dimension of everyday practice is the unifying or homogenizing force of what he refers to as ‘group habitus’. Like Gramsci’s (Gramsci, 1971/2010) notion of ‘common sense’, the conception of group habitus at the level of individual understanding is at best “fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential” (p. 419). As a result, the social norms in which daily thoughts and actions are embedded are not rendered clear and explicit in everyday interactions. The general lack of critical expression around precisely what values and broad principles implicitly shape a person’s everyday actions “causes an individual agent’s practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less ‘sensible’ and ‘reasonable’” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79). As such, the homogenizing element of group habitus results not from any explicit coordination on the part of the group or class, but instead from “the homogeneity of the conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized” (p. 80). The development of commonly expressed practices does not require that individuals communicate explicit intentions to each other. Rather, group identity is grounded in the “diffuse, uncoordinated features” of thought implicit in the ways of being common to “a particular period and a particular popular environment” (Gramsci, 1971/2010, p. 330n). Bourdieu explains this phenomenon thus:

Though it is impossible for all members of the same class (or even two of them) to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for the members of that class. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 85)

The common experience of being part of a group or class, for Goffman “is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed” (Goffman, 1959, p. 75). He goes on to describe social position as “... a pattern of conduct... Performed with ease or clumsiness awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized” (p. 75). Hence, the sustainability of the distribution of the sensible as described by Rancière (2004) does not necessarily imply passivity on the part of workers. On the contrary, it requires that individual workers overtly perform patterns of acceptable conduct in everyday life. In the context of the SAWP, individual workers carry with them, “in the form of dispositions”, the marks of present and past experiences of migration, mistreatment, abuse, survival and resistance (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). It is my position that SAWP workers as a group carry with them and to varying degrees perform in their daily lives the implicit understanding of “knowing one’s place” and “staying there” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82).

### **‘Intimacy without Warmth’: Familiarity, Dramaturgical Cooperation and Bunkhouse Relations**

While it is certainly the case that relations between workers and employers are crucial to shaping the subjective experience of employment in the SAWP (Preibisch, 2007a), perhaps even more immediate to a worker’s everyday experiences are the interpersonal relationships that develop between workers. Given the nature of the living-at-work arrangement, generally the most intimate relations that develop in the context of the SAWP are those that develop between workers themselves, most often in the dormitory/bunkhouse. How do these relations shape the experience of participating in the program and how do they influence a worker’s decision to subvert prescribed subject positions? Goffman discusses the importance of what he refers to as ‘teamwork’ in maintaining appearances. He provides the analytical tool of “dramaturgical cooperation”, which he explains is the particular congruence between what he calls “familiarity” and “dependence” (Goffman, 1959, p. 85). In Goffman’s words:

While a team-performance is in progress, any member of the team has the power to give the show away or to disrupt it by inappropriate conduct. Each teammate is forced to rely on the good conduct and behavior of his fellows, and they, in turn, are forced to rely on him. There is then, perforce, a bond of reciprocal dependence linking teammates to one another. (p. 82)

In the context of the SAWP, what Goffman is describing here can be characterized as an important collective survival strategy. The dynamics that must be enacted through individual workers' bodies in everyday settings in order to ensure the proper distribution of the sensible are enacted through a collectively recognized performance. Team members must collectively cooperate if they are to maintain a certain commonly understood characterization of the situation in the presence of their audience. Performers on a team, thus "form a secret society... in so far as a secret is kept as to how they are co-operating together to maintain a particular definition of the situation" (Goffman, p. 105). It follows therefore that team members must approach one another as "accomplices in the maintenance of a particular appearance of things" (p. 83). As such, workers must approach each other as fellow performers "before whom a particular front cannot be maintained" (p. 83). Dependence is thus congruent with familiarity to form a relationship that Goffman describes as "intimacy without warmth" (p. 83). I argue that this dynamic is especially pronounced given the living-at-work arrangement of the SAWP. More than just team members, for SAWP workers the bonds of familiarity and dependence are amplified through the extension of workers' everyday relations to the bunkhouse. As the nexus of worker relations, the bunkhouse is a potentially critical site for not only consolidating employer control, as was my argument in the previous chapter, but also for the development of offstage camaraderie, and inevitably of course, enmity.

Any disruption in the performance of expected roles, either by an individual or a group, could be perceived to be an affront to the way things are supposed to be and may thus embarrass "the reality sponsored by the team" (Goffman, 1959, p. 86). Conduct disruptive of the common 'stage directions' may well interrupt the status quo on a wider scale, but on a more intimate, and indeed immediate, scale could offend the bond of workers' collective familiarity. An individual worker who resists in the workplace is not just representing his or her individual interests as a worker, but he or she must be seen as also a part of the 'team', and as such, their behaviour "cannot fail

to threaten the definition they are collectively maintaining” (p. 83). To be accepted as a team member in the workplace requires that a worker reproduce a certain collective characterization of the situation, and as such worker resistance at almost any scale must be understood in the context of group power relations. There are definite risks involved with not towing the party line and going against the desires of the group. By allowing backstage attitudes to seep into everyday on-stage performances, an individual worker or a small group of workers who openly resist exploitation in the workplace may pose a definite threat to the wider group’s overall performance of deference and diligence. Any worker who intervenes on this collective performance risks not only punishment from the employer or state officials, as was discussed in the previous chapter, but also castigation from their fellow workmates. On this Goffman is clear: “As an object of friendship he may be studiously ignored, but as a threat to the team’s definition of the situation, he cannot be overlooked” (p. 83). Suspicion among workers is often particularly high against those workers who are perceived to constitute a potential ‘performance risk’ – as it is not clear if they are able or willing to stay in line. Rancière found a similar dynamic at play in his historical examination of the daily lives of 19<sup>th</sup> century French artisans (Rancière, 1981/2012). On this he says:

The happy relationship of the worker to his work shatters on the only thing that might make it purposeful to him: a fraternal relationship with another worker... His hope for a different relationship with his work is ruined by the looks of complicity binding the other workers to their master. (p. 63)

In the context of the SAWP, this quote highlights how younger workers or those workers who are new to the program may be perceived as less fluent in the accepted vernacular and thus may face a higher risk of being on the receiving end of inter-worker resentment.

When it occurs, inter-worker retribution for workplace discretions primarily takes place outside of the workplace and within the more concealed realm of the intimate, and can significantly shape bunkhouse relations. Generally speaking, workers may only exact retaliation against each other surreptitiously so as not to make “the audience privy to a view that ought to be reserved for teammates” (Goffman, 1959, p. 89). Bearing in mind SAWP workers’ daily audience is largely comprised of employers and other authority figures, so as not to disturb the recognized

distribution of roles, inter-personal antagonism among workers is largely limited to the sphere of workers' 'hidden transcript' (Scott, 1985). The performance of deference implies the decision on behalf of those who are doing the performing to conceal the performance of actions which may be perceived as inconsistent with dominant social norms. Certain forms of conduct which may be considered inappropriate for public display may thus be performed in private. In the words of Goffman, whenever "a member of the team makes a mistake in the presence of an audience, the other team members often must suppress their immediate desire to punish and instruct the offender until, that is, the audience is no longer present" (Goffman, p. 89). Beyond the gaze of the employer, intimate worker relations are complex and intertwined with a dramaturgical and embodied presentation that in general may tend to reproduce the accepted distribution of migrant worker bodies in the SAWP.

***El Relajo and Bunkhouse Relations: Spoiling the Desire for Freedom?***

An alternative and I argue a complementary approach to understanding the performance of the commonly accepted distribution of migrant worker bodies in the SAWP can be developed through a reading of Jorge Portilla's *Fenomenología del Relajo* (Portilla, 1966/2012). Portilla, who, throughout the 1950s was a prominent member of the Mexican existential philosophy group *el Hiperión*, devoted a significant portion of his work to understanding the culture of everyday life as experienced in Mexico (Sánchez, 2012). In an attempt to penetrate the collective psyche, Portilla focuses his philosophical investigations on the meaning behind what may seem to be an insignificant or fleeting collective behaviour: the experience of laughter associated with mocking, teasing, or just joking around. In other words, "that form of repeated and sometimes loud collective joking that emerges sporadically in the daily life of our country" (as cited in Sánchez, 2012, p. 7). On this he says,

... a form of consciousness so incidental and transitory as mockery or laughter can serve as a key to understanding essential characteristics of the human condition or to penetrate the spiritual structure of a people; because of the spontaneity and the lack of reflection that usually accompany it, it can do this even better than other, more respectable forms of consciousness such as politics and art. (p. 124)

Thus begins Portilla's landmark contribution to Mexican culture and philosophy: his coining and subsequent analysis of the phenomenon of *relajo*, which incidentally has no adequate English translation (Sánchez, 2012). Portilla describes *relajo* as a cultural phenomenon and collective behaviour specific to Mexican society, one that he claims is at the root of "a lack of community, solidarity, and responsibility" (Sánchez, 2012, p. 7) that for Portilla defined modern Mexico as he experienced it, and as Sánchez later argued, may be a phenomenon common to all contemporary society (Sánchez, 2012).

Admittedly, as a concrete action in the real world, it is difficult to describe what exactly *relajo* is (De Genova, 2005, p. 168; Sánchez, 2012). In short, Portilla describes *relajo* as "... a self-destructive movement. It is an attitude that is exactly the opposite of the normal, spontaneous attitude of human beings faced with values when those values act upon consciousness like a guide for self-constitution" (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 147). For the sake of contrast, Portilla compares *relajo* to the arguably similar acts of mocking and teasing. Portilla argues that the primary difference between *relajo* and these is its intentionality. For Portilla, teasing demands the preservation of the relationship as the one teasing presumes superiority over the other. The point of *relajo* on the other hand is to totally neutralize the people or situations that are its object and "it ends up directed exclusively to itself, to the maintaining of an atmosphere of disorder and detachment" (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 138). Teasing wants to hold the attention of the spectator on the object of teasing, while *relajo* is about an "intentionality of deviation" (p. 138). Thus the intentionality of *relajo* is toward chaos, digression, and negation of a 'value' which "appears embodied in a repository or agent that can be a person, an institution, or a situation, and at the same time... calls on my support in order for it to acquire full reality" (p. 146). While the ontological status of Portilla's notion of 'value' is left somewhat ambiguous, he argues that the value must be a thing locatable in the world and "a pure solicitation to my freedom, a guide for my self-constitution" (p. 147). *Relajo* can thus spoil this appeal to freedom "by preventing the manifestation of value and dismantling the situation that would allow it" (p. 146).

Sánchez has recently translated Portilla's notion of *relajo* as 'the suspension of seriousness', defined as "the suspension of a determinate event through a repetitious interruption of the values which hold it together" (Sánchez, 2012, p. 8), or in the words of Portilla, the suspension or annihilation of "a subject's adherence to a value proposed to his or her freedom" (Portilla,

1966/2012, p. 128). *Relajo* is thus an action in the world which “provokes... the modification of a situation... the arranging of the surrounding world in a certain order” (p. 136). Portilla explains that in order to understand the moral significance of *relajo*, we must first understand the notion of freedom as something that shines through from experiences of liberation. This may correspond to an external liberation related to the overcoming of some obstacle present in the world or may be related to something which is purely interior to an individual. *Relajo* undoes the value of freedom and replaces it with something Portilla refers to as ‘negative freedom’, or simply the mere illusion of freedom. He says:

Relajo goes into a blind alley, into the illusion of negative freedom, and it attains only infecundity. It is an action geared toward obstructing action with sense. Thus, to the degree that it is effective, relajo is effective for failure. It pursues a mirage of value: freedom as a simple no; that is to say, it pursues the value that can exist in not realizing value. (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 187)

The basis of *relajo* is a deviation from or a displacement of what he refers to as “authentic seriousness”, or the ‘seriousness’ that constitutes a free and liberated subject (Sánchez, 2012, p. 38). This digression thus inhibits the full realization of what he calls “positive freedom”, which he describes as the choice and capacity to be one’s own master (p. 54). Not only does *relajo* prevent the realization of “effective action”, but for Portilla, “with its negativity, it erases the motivation of the action itself... *Relajo* kills action in its cradle” (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 188). *Relajo* therefore constitutes a threat to the community in such a way that further serves to marginalize those communities that have been historically colonized (Sánchez, 2012, p. 20). In the words of Sánchez, Portilla “considers relajo as a reactionary suspension of reason and destiny, one that defers the emergence of subjectivity, thereby maintaining the postcolonial self in a perpetual state of marginality and silence” (Sánchez, 2012, p. 86).

A primary reason that Portilla considers *relajo* to be associated with the emergence of a crisis of community is that relajo is never experienced in isolation, but rather only in the context of a collective. In the words of Portilla: “*Relajo* is an invocation to others present... *Relajo* in solitude is unthinkable, or I should say, unimaginable” (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 132). Thus, according to Portilla, with *relajo* there is always a double intentionality: “It is constituted both by my lack of

solidarity [with a value] and by my intent to involve others in this lack of solidarity, which creates a common environment of detachment before the value” (p. 133). If we apply *relajo* to the context of the SAWP living-at-work arrangement and migrant farm workers’ collective performance of acceptable subject positions, we may intuit that bunkhouse relations that stifle workers’ efforts toward gaining even a modicum of personal freedom may constitute a crisis of community in the bunkhouse, as well as in the workplace. On the surface, this description of *relajo* as a communal action which carries the intention to involve others in one’s digression from solidarity and freedom sounds similar to descriptions of what have been described elsewhere as ‘crab antics’. Wilson (1973) describes these as

... behaviour that resembles that of a number of crabs who, having been placed in a barrel, all try to climb out. But as one nears the top, the one below pulls him down in his own effort to climb. Only a particularly strong crab ever climbs out – the rest, in the long run, remain in the same place. (p. 58)

However, while crab antics are grounded in a competition for resources, acts associated with *relajo* may instead involve the negation of the very *motivation* to experiment with subject positions other than the ones on offer in the context of the SAWP, not only for workers as individuals, but for workers as a collective.

A more nuanced understanding of how social interactions in the bunkhouse may influence SAWP workers’ experiences of deference and resistance requires a theoretical framework that places at its centre an analysis of collective performances in everyday life. While approaching the theme of social interaction in daily life from very different perspectives and contexts, both Goffman and Portilla provide valuable tools for addressing the complex experience of bunkhouse relations that are embedded in the SAWP living-at-work arrangement, and how these may contribute to workers’ performance of prescribed subject positions. However, neither Goffman’s portrayal of ‘on-stage’ performances nor Portilla’s depiction of *relajo* as the negation of positive value should be understood as impervious to challenges and transformation. In Goffman’s ethnographic study of ‘total institutions’ (Goffman, 1962) for example, he celebrates the resistance of “an obligation to be of a given character and to dwell in a given world... a defaulting not from prescribed activity but from prescribed being” (p. 188). In his ethnographic

work, which took place in a large mental health institution, he documented the “underlives” of patients, whose “sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks” (p. 320). For Goffman these underlives tell “... homely little histories, each in its way a movement of liberty” for “when existence is cut to the bone, we can learn what people do to flesh out their lives” (p. 305). He goes on to say that it is “against something that the self can emerge... our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways we resist the pull” (p. 320). People thus have a tendency to move toward freedom from prescribed ways of being, especially when faced with particularly harsh living conditions. Likewise, Portilla discusses the transgression of *relajo*. Admittedly, taken at face value, Portilla’s analysis of *relajo* as “nihilism disguised as good humour” (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 149) in daily social interactions is clearly quite grim (De Genova, 2005, pp. 168-173). In his work, Portilla “suggested that what must be overcome in order to achieve a meaningful life is the seduction of *relajo*, the seduction of its irresponsibility and its call for detachment from those values constitutive of meaningful experience” (Sánchez, 2012, p. 20). Thus, for Portilla, *relajo* as form of social interaction is something that must be overcome, both by individuals and by society as a whole if freedom is to be attained. Both authors therefore provide space to explore the desire for a different kind of social interactive performances, performances which are not embedded in the perceived need to preserve the status quo. In the following and final section, I will delve deeper into exploring the possibility of subverting, or at least challenging, the commonly accepted distribution of migrant bodies in Canada’s SAWP. For this, I will turn to the concept of ‘rupture’ and in doing so will return to a discussion of the concept of the distribution of the sensible as discussed by Jacques Rancière as examined in the previous chapter.

### **Rupture**

In the final section of this chapter I will focus primarily on exploring and developing a theoretical frame that can address the potential ways in which migrant farm workers may interrupt the performance of prescribed ways of being associated with their participation in the SAWP. The seemingly small ways that workers may resist everyday performances that facilitate the commonly accepted distribution of migrant workers’ bodies contribute to not only a sense of dignity, but perhaps more importantly, a sense of freedom otherwise obscured by their participation in Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

As I discussed above, agency in the context of migrant workers has often been associated with dignity through small acts (Chin, 1998; Constable, 1997; Rogaly, 2009) or with collective organizing and political change (Basok & Carasco, 2010; Constable, 2009). What I argue here is that there may be another, perhaps more ambiguous context in which worker agency takes place, and that is within the context of workers' desire and struggle to simply be 'free' – free to choose the parameters of their own everyday lives. In small ways, individual workers often seek out and find ways of resisting the prescribed being of the bunkhouse and the worksite, and of opposing the accepted performance of deferential social interactions that bunkhouse relations may facilitate. As I explored above, while over time an embodied habitus may develop among SAWP workers in such a way that workers as a collective come to develop certain rituals in their daily lives that sustain the rules that regulate the program, my position differs from Bourdieu in the sense that I argue that this habitus is potentially fragile and susceptible to questioning and reflection (Ng, 2011). In the context of a temporary foreign labour program that may most accurately be described as the exploitation of unfree labour (Lenard & Straehle, 2012; Satzewich, 1991; Walia, 2010), workers' overall desire to carve out a better life for themselves and their families in their home countries cannot be separated from workers' desire to express themselves freely in the context of their daily lives while in Canada. Through an examination of the concept of 'rupture' (Rancière, 2000, p. 124), the final section of this chapter will examine the possibilities of workers' interrupting and interrogating the performance of the distribution of the sensible in the context of the SAWP. In particular, this section will provide a frame with which to understand how workers' experimentation with activities that do not correspond to the SAWP's prescribed subject positions may be understood as politically significant. The section will end with a discussion of the aesthetic dimension of workers' interruption of prescribed subject position and the corresponding implications for the practice of adult education in this context.

The bulk of this section will examine the work of Jacques Rancière, beginning with the social and political implications of his research into the everyday lives of 19<sup>th</sup> century French artisans and moving on to his discussion of the indelible relation between art and politics. Where appropriate, I will compare his work to the work of other cultural and pedagogical theorists and post-colonial writers such as Homi K. Bhabha (1984, 1994) and Paolo Freire (1973, 1970/2006). In order to fully appreciate the work of Rancière, it is instructive to begin with his early work, in

particular his book *Proletarian Nights* (1981/2012), which is a historical and philosophical examination of working class life and class consciousness in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, France. In this book, Rancière describes a specific form of working class anguish, one whose wellspring is not workers' general discontentment with things like working conditions or pay, but one that rather finds its roots in the "very necessity of working itself" (Rancière, 1981/2012, p. 54). In his book, Rancière provides a detailed and unique examination of workers' voices through an examination of a wide variety of original sources, "from personal confidence or the recital of daily experience through to philosophical speculations and programs for the future, by way of the fictitious stories recorded in their journals" (Rancière, 1981/2012, x). Using the texts of workers themselves, Rancière challenges the idea famously put forward by Socrates in Plato's *Republic* (Plato, approx. 380 BC/2012), that those who occupy the station of worker, or labourer "are supposed to be equipped for working, not for peripheral activities such as looking around and investigating how society at large works" (Rancière, 2009, p. 275). Rancière presents workers' narratives as a counter-myth to what he refers to as the complex dialectic of social distribution that "rests on that circle of the empirical and the prescriptive": the empirical fact that workers have little time for anything other than work, and the prescriptive fact that they are not destined for anything *but* work (p. 276). On the contrary, Rancière claims that workers need

to entertain and maintain... [their] passions and desires for another world. Otherwise the constraints of labor will level them down to the mere instinct for survival and subsistence, turning the worker brutalized by work and sleep into the servant and accomplice of the rich people bloated by egotism and idleness. (Rancière, 1981/2012, p. 20)

What Rancière documents in *Proletarian Nights* is the subversion of the performance of inequality among 19<sup>th</sup> century French artisans. Stemming from this unique contribution to labour history, Rancière has developed an equally distinctive understanding of social emancipation. For Rancière, emancipation is not associated with the peeling away of ignorance, or what Freire (1970/2006) refers to as a "deepened consciousness of their situation..." (p. 85), as "[n]o one needs to tell workers that they are exploited; this they already know" (Reid, 2012, p. xxxi). This understanding of workers' ignorance with regards to exploitation is similarly discussed by Pun (2005) in relation to her recent research with Chinese migrant workers. As discussed briefly in

the above section on agency, Pun's work reveals how class-consciousness may develop independently of social movements and class struggle. Rather, consciousness develops through workers' daily experiences of domination (Piven & Cloward, 1979; E. P. Thompson, 1991). This characterization of how workers' own consciousness of oppression can survive alongside workers' daily performances of inequality and deference leads Rancière to develop a notion of emancipation that is not grounded in lifting the veil of ignorance. Instead, emancipation is associated with workers rejecting the very logic of inequality on which the distribution of the sensible is based. Thus, emancipation for Rancière corresponds intimately with social and political agency on the part of individuals and communities at the 'margins' and involves subverting the performance of inequality and rejecting the common sense organization of subject positions. Agency may thus correspond to what Bhabha (1994) refers to as "the return of the subject" (p. 190), and may be understood as both an interruption and an interrogation of prescribed subject positions.

In his historical research, Rancière reports that he did not find a cultural unity among the working-class. What he did find, however, was a certain generality in working-class expression that conveyed a particular working-class identity. The importance of Rancière's work lies in his assertion that this working-class identity was not "rooted in the soil of utopian culture", and was "completely tied to a denial of the identity imposed by Others" (Rancière, 2011, p. 22). As such, Rancière's work is a critique of Marxist discourse developed by his contemporaries which at the time tended to promote a view of working-class identity and resistance that relied on the assumption that workers "are where they are because they don't know why they are where they are...", and that workers can "step out of that place only if they were given a true scientific knowledge and right artistic representations of the reasons for their being there" (Rancière, 2009, p. 275). On the contrary, Rancière reported that workers in general acted with derision toward speeches that "dragged on about the activist ideal, conceived in categories of sacrifice as opposed to pleasure, and paid in the surplus value of power" (Rancière, 2011, p. 26). Through his empirical work, Rancière describes the experience of a working-class identity thus:

The experience of a working-class identity lived in the mode of a split, an absolute rift, denouncing with the robust strength of the proud labourer the sheer nervous tension of despair produced by the basic reality of labour being simply

the abstraction of hours in the workshop, the reality of time stolen, with skill and the possible attraction of labour providing at most a diversion from one's own pains – a description that challenges the supposedly natural road from exploitation to emancipation by the workers 'becoming conscious' and reappropriating their identity. The path of emancipation far rather appears as passing by way of the capacity to become different: not by becoming conscious, but by dizziness and loss of identity. (p. 26)

Thus for Rancière, the continued performance of inequality is not grounded in false consciousness, but rather in belief. Rancière's position is thus a critique of the notion that deferential social interactions as they are performed by workers should be understood as "false consciousness *par excellence*" (Newby, 1975, p. 140). As such, for Rancière, outward signs of deference must not be thought of as indicative of workers' ignorance of inequity and discrimination. Rather, Rancière approaches the performance of deference from a different angle. He argues that the logic of inequality is easily believed among workers, and consequently performed, as long as workers' sensation of inequality fits into the reality of their condition. On this he says: "Inequality has to be performed by those who endure it as their life, as what they feel, what they are aware of" (Rancière, 2009, 276). He continues: "It is enough that they *sense* it: that is, that they use their arms, their eyes, and their minds *as if* it were true" (p. 276). For the working-class, whether 19<sup>th</sup> century French carpenters or present-day migrant farm workers in Canada, the performance of inequality is thus grounded in a deeply embodied experience of everyday life, and not, as some may argue, in ignorance. What Rancière's work emphasizes is that social and political emancipation requires a subversion of this belief and subsequently, this performance. Significantly, this subversion may be grounded in no more than a change of perception that constitutes a rupture in the belief in the collectively held story that things can be no other way. Rancière's analysis of working-class texts reveals a subversion of the distribution of the sensible by revealing an entire world of working-class life devoted to the production of arts and letters that was previously unknown or at least thought to be lacking in historical importance, since this life was so "far from the solid realities of the factory and organized struggle" (Rancière, 1981/2012, iix). What his research reveals, however, is the desire among workers and indeed reveals the capacity of workers to participate in activities not associated with

the position of worker; for example writing about enjoying “the sunrise on the river” or discussing “metaphysics at an inn” or taking the time to “discuss, write, compose verses, or develop philosophies” (Rancière, 1981/2012, p. ix). For Rancière, workers’ participation in such seemingly frivolous activities should not be classified as mere marginal diversions. On the contrary, these acts constituted a way for workers not only to demand what was refused of them, but constituted the act of *taking it for themselves*. What became apparent to Rancière was that

workers had never needed the secrets of domination explained to them, as their problem was quite a different one. It was to withdraw themselves, intellectually and materially, from the forms by which this domination imprinted on their bodies, and imposed on their actions... (p. ix)

Workers’ active participation in cultural and artistic endeavors provided an opportunity for workers to wrench “themselves out of an identity formed by domination” and assert “themselves as inhabitants with full rights of a common world, capable of all the refinement... that had previously been reserved for those classes relieved of the daily cares of work and bread” (p. ix). For Rancière this subversion of the distribution of the sensible through an overt disruption in “its divisions into work and rest, labor, and leisure” (Hinderliter, Kaizen, Maimon, Mansoor, & McCormick, 2009, p. 7) is a political act as it represents a clash between the ‘police state’ (described in the previous chapter) and the quest for egalitarian politics. Workers’ participation in cultural production may be understood as an enunciatory practice, in other words, a practice by which, in the words of Bhabha (1994) “objectified others may be turned into the subjects of their history and experience” (p. 178). More than just individual acts of agency or resistance, these moments of rupture, even while they may not in and of themselves address larger processes of oppression and domination, may represent for workers an encounter with equality, in other words, with an identity that far exceeds the frames of distribution of migrant workers’ bodies. For Bhabha, the type of rupture that Rancière is describing may leave “a resistant trace, a stain on the subject, a sight of resistance” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 49). What this “sight of resistance” may kindle for workers, if we follow the logic of Rancière, is not an “awareness of their condition” but rather a “passion that can make them break their condition, because it is the passion that their condition forbade” (Rancière, 2009, p. 278). As such, for workers to engage in something other than work – to purposefully go against the grain and subvert the distribution of their own bodies

through the performance of something else – and in some other format – gives rise to political subjectivity (Hinderliter et al., 2009; Nancy, 2009; Jacques Rancière, 1992).

For Rancière politics and art are inseparable (Bishop, 2012; Lewis, 2012). As I have discussed above, for Rancière, the distribution of the sensible is maintained through a communal *sensual* belief in the logic of inequality. An aesthetic politics plays with the norms of representation by intervening in “the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility” (Rancière, 2004, p. 13). As such, throughout his work, Rancière treats the field of aesthetics not as a depoliticized theory of art, but rather as an integral factor in the organization and subversion of the distribution of the sensible. In the words of Hinderliter et al., (2009) “aesthetics and politics are imbricated in the constitution of specific orders of visibility and sense through which the political division into assigned roles and defined parts manifests itself” (p. 1). For Bhabha as well, aesthetics is a crucial form of meaning production in the context of social survival and subaltern politics, in the sense that the affective experience of social marginality

... forces us to confront the concept of culture outside object d’art or beyond the canonization of the ‘idea’ of aesthetics, to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 172)

In his essay “Good times, or, pleasure at the Barrière” (2011a), Rancière discusses in particular the role of art and performance in subverting the distribution of the sensible. He says: “The worker who, without having learned to spell, tried his hand at making verses to the taste of the day, was perhaps more dangerous for the existing ideological order than the one who sung revolutionary songs” (p. 181). In his historical research, Rancière found that art was dangerous not because it provoked one to revolt, but because it offered those workers on the ‘margins’ an opportunity to express an identity other than the one to which they were prescribed. As such, “Aesthetic disruption blurs boundaries between what can and cannot be said, can and cannot be seen, thus expanding, reconfiguring, and mixing notions of what is common to a community” (Lewis, 2012, p. 62). Lewis (2012) explains that theatre, particularly popular forms of theatre

such as the Theatre of the Oppressed as developed by the late Brazilian theatre director and educator Augusto Boal (1985) (which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter) have a way of promoting

a habit of being where you were not supposed to be, in ‘uncertain spaces’ where the drama of class contact and conflation was never scripted in advance and could not be controlled by either the state or the working-class intellectuals who desired to maintain the telos of revolution. (Lewis, 2012, pp. 40-41)

In the context of the SAWP, workers’ creation of art, such as theatre, is an important reminder that “... the state of emergency is also always a state of emergence” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 41). Indeed, popular forms of art and theatre may offer a rebellion against the act of *relajo* as characterized by Portilla above. The potential openness and playfulness of engaging with participatory artistic practices outside of the dormitory/workplace could suspend seriousness in such a way that evades Portilla’s particularly nihilistic conjecture. The act of playfulness in this context may suspend not the seriousness of freedom, but on the contrary, could subvert the seriousness of what Rancière would characterize as the “servitude of work” (Rancière, 2009a, p. 31). This is consistent with Carse’s observation that “Seriousness is a dread of the unpredictable outcome of open possibility. To be serious is to press for a specified conclusion. To be playful is to allow for possibility whatever the cost to oneself” (Carse, 1986, p. 19). As such, the radicalness of art or of theatre in particular, may not necessarily lie in its content, or even in its presentation, but in its very existence and workers’ participation in it. The moment in which workers come together to laugh, play and generally take part in an artistic event in which they have no business participating signifies a breach in the norms of control, and a possible transgression of *relajo*.

### **Rupture, Emancipation, Aesthetics: Implications for Adult Education**

Rancière’s conceptualization of political emancipation and its relationship to aesthetics and in particular the theatrical form has broad pedagogical implications, in particular with regards to critical pedagogy and popular education (Biesta, 2010; Bingham & Biesta, 2010; Lewis, 2012). Rancière’s fundamental critique of critical pedagogy lies in his distrust of the process of consciousness-raising, or the process of conscientization as described by Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire (1973, 1970/2006). Following Rancière’s logic, Biesta (2010) claims that

consciousness-raising “introduces a fundamental dependency into the logic of emancipation, since the one to be emancipated remains dependent upon the truth or knowledge revealed to him by the emancipator” (p. 40). Indeed, while Freire famously argued that in theory emancipatory education “must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others” (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 89), he himself admitted that in practice, critical educators must assume authority over their students (Lewis, 2012; Weiler, 1991). As Freire points out, “the educator continues to be different from the students...” but adds that educators must not permit this difference from becoming ‘antagonistic’ (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 93). However, as Weiler (1991) has argued, Freire never fully addresses the question of unequal power relations related to gender, race or class that could lead to antagonisms in the relationship between critical educator and her students. “Without naming these sources of tension”, Weiler (1991) argues, “... calls for a collective liberation or for opposition to oppression slide over the surface of tensions that may emerge among teachers and students as subjects with conflicting interests and histories and with different kinds of knowledge and power” (p. 454). Rancière similarly highlights what he considers to be a fundamental contradiction in the logic of consciousness-raising – the idea that emancipation can be brought about only once those requiring emancipation achieve adequate insight into the power relations that constitute their domination (Biesta, 2010). In general, Rancière argues that this logic of emancipation is grounded in a distrust of the personal and embodied experiences of those with whom the critical educator is entrusted to emancipate. In the words of Biesta (2010), “The logic of emancipation dictates... that we cannot really trust what we see or feel, but that we need someone else to tell us what it is that we are experiencing and what our problems really are” (p. 46). One of Rancière’s main contributions to art and critical pedagogy is his attempt to avoid these hazards of engaging with a pedagogic model based on lifting the veil of ignorance in favour of a method that favours “rupture and ambiguity” (Bishop, 2012, p. 29). At the same time, Rancière approaches the politics of education as a principally embodied undertaking, as his pedagogical method is “firmly grounded in the pre-conceptual world of sensations and perceptions” (Lewis, 2012, p. 56). Hence, it follows from Rancière’s position that people from traditionally marginalized or oppressed groups can only experience emancipation or truly participate in popular forms of art and pedagogy when they are not only mentally engaged, but *physically* engaged, in effect discarding “the prejudice by which working-class activity is restricted to manual labour” (Bishop, 2012, p. 38).

Lewis (2012) explores the work of Paolo Freire (1970/2006) through the lens of Rancière, and emphasizes the importance of Freire's work in highlighting dialogic education as an "aesthetic event", or in other words a potential rupture through which a dialogic relationship may develop (Lewis, 2012, p. 60). Nevertheless, Lewis argues that Freire's understanding of identity does not transcend predefined categories within "a certain partitioning of the sensible" (p. 69), as his theory of pedagogy is embedded in the logic of emancipation as demystification critiqued by Rancière. That notwithstanding, Lewis argues that the most valuable part of Freire's work is not the process of consciousness-raising, but rather "the aesthetic event that creates the visual and verbal stage wherein dialogue may take place. It is this event as the sudden, dissentual break with the status quo of banking education that is the political force of Freire's practice" (p. 60). Dialogic education, described by Foley as "educators using their power to create educational situations in which learners can exercise power" (Foley, 2001, p. 75) is contrasted to what Freire refers to as 'banking education', a pedagogical approach in which educators discuss "reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable... [Their] task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of [their] narration" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 72). According to Lewis, Freire's practice of dialogic education, when divorced from the practice of consciousness-raising may allow a "dis-identification" of one's identity, and may facilitate the subversion of *passive* student and *active* teacher (p. 63). Lewis (2012) goes on to examine in detail the aesthetic dimensions of dialogic pedagogical encounters. He explains: "Education becomes an artistic event at the precise moment it becomes political, i.e. at the moment when banking is ruptured through a repartitioning of the sensible" (p. 66). The desire and performance of freedom through a subversion of subject positions may serve to articulate, in the words of Bhabha, "those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (Bhabha, 1984, p. 129). Ng (2011) refers to these types of pedagogical encounters as 'decolonizing education', or moments of interruption that serve to interrogate

how we, as individuals living within and being part of collectivities reproduce and sustain systems of oppression... we reproduce oppression through normalized patterns of behaviour that have been developed over time that have become 'natural', automatic and unconscious actions and ways of being in the world. (p. 361)

Indeed, if and when migrant farm workers do decide to enact and make visible a subject position other than that of ‘migrant worker’, this may be seen as a direct challenge to processes of domination, poor treatment and racism that permeate the SAWP by both disrupting these processes and making them visible. This may be seen as dangerous or radical, as, what is at stake is the “very social and psychic representation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 41) of the SAWP as a benign, or even benevolent opportunity for the social and financial advancement of third-world subjects (Bauder, 2008) and integrally, of Canadians as exalted subjects (Thobani, 2007).

For Lewis, the practices of popular theatre and performance, such as the Theatre of the Oppressed, may reveal “... the inherent aesthetic event that lies at the very heart of critical pedagogy” (Lewis, 2012, p.59). That said, much of the literature on and practice of popular forms of art and performance have attempted to graft to artistic practice the desire for a material production of political efficacy tied to the process of consciousness-raising and the logic of emancipation grounded in demystification (Bishop, 2012). However, in contrast to “the potential efficacy of theatrical performance” (Kershaw, 1992, p. 1), if we follow the logic of Rancière, it could be argued that rather than efficacy being the most valuable element of theatrical performance, it may be its seeming frivolity or even its playfulness that poses a greater threat to the demands of capitalist production. This becomes particularly palpable when the value of those performing bodies is understood primarily through an economic lens, as is the case with Canada’s migrant farm workers. This is an understanding of performance taken up in the discipline of performance studies. For example, Phelan (1993), a feminist performance scholar, argues that it is immateriality itself that characterizes the ontology of performance. For Phelan, “Performance is the art form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance. Poised forever at the threshold of the present, performance enacts the productive appeal of the nonreproductive” (p. 27). She continues:

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being... becomes itself through disappearance. (p. 146)

It is this immateriality, this inherent non-reproducibility, a propensity toward disappearance and an outlook toward the present that make performance abhorrent to the economy of production; all qualities that Phelan argues give “performance arts its distinctive oppositional edge” (p. 148). Migrant workers’ participation in performance art, if it occurs, has no value economically; it is superfluous to their value to the agricultural industry and to the Canadian economy, and as such may be understood as radical. In this way, it may be possible to construct a whole other pedagogy of the oppressed “out of and through theatre” in the sense that dramatic performance and pedagogy merge – “each transforming the other in complex sublation” (Lewis, 2012, p. 59). In other words, it may be that the ontological characteristics of performance as immaterial and non-reproducible make it perhaps a potentially ideal artistic format for sparking a rupture, igniting a dialogue and engaging learners in radical educational encounters.

When they engage physically in popular performance, workers become the objects of the spectators’ gaze in the workshop setting and on the stage. The body of the migrant farm worker as social or political agent thus comes to be seen and experienced through the appearance of the worker as something other than just a ‘worker’. Workers come to be seen as artists, as performers, as creators, or even just as flâneurs. The active and indeed visible engagement of workers in artistic or expressive pursuits outside the realm of the dormitory/workplace may indeed constitute a rupture, however slight, in the distribution of the sensible through a reimagining of migrant worker subject positions that restores the worker as embodied subject. However, being seen as an embodied subject is a political, and not a neutral act, and as such it carries with it corresponding risks that cannot be ignored. In particular, if one is being seen, it begs the question *by whom*. In the words of Phelan (1993), “There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal... Visibility is a trap...; it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonial/imperial appetite for possession” (p. 6). In the case of SAWP workers, as I argued above, being seen as anything other than worker by one’s co-workers may present its own risk of inter-worker chastisement. Workers seen as embodied subjects by their employers or local Canadians may present its own particular risks. In other words, to transgress the field of vision that is the distribution of the sensible is to risk the surrender of relative security that being hidden provides: a surrender of “familiarity, insularity, and routine” (Brown, 1995, p. 4) but at the same time may

offer workers an "...investment in a more open horizon of possibility and sustained willingness to risk identity both collective and individual" (Brown, 1995, p. 4).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have brought together three distinct concepts, agency, performance and rupture, as a way of developing a theoretical framework which may help to shed light on the everyday lives of SAWP workers and their experiences of accommodation and subversion of prescribed ways of being, saying and doing. The concept of labour agency, in particular as concerns migrant workers, has been explored as a wide conceptual frame within which these everyday experiences in the dormitory/workplace may be better understood. I begin my overall argument by examining how even though SAWP workers have little to no formal avenues for collective organizing, workers do indeed develop a collective consciousness of exploitation through the everyday and embodied experiences of domination, control, accommodation and resistance. Both recent (Pun, 2005) and classic (Ong, 1987) empirical studies of women factory workers and migrant housekeepers (Chin, 1998; Constable, 2007) in a variety of global contexts reveal that workers, and migrant workers in particular should not be considered mere passive victims of global forces. While unorganized migrant workers may be limited in their options to resist exploitative working conditions, empirical research underscores how in daily life, workers act as "tactical agents" in the formation of their own lives (Pun, 2005, pp. 62-63). In the particular context of the SAWP, these experiences necessarily take place within the confines of the living-at-work arrangement. However, while research has shown that in China for example, the living-at-work arrangement may engender a sense of solidarity and a desire to collectively organize among unorganized workers in the dormitory/workplace, as I shall discuss in more detail in subsequent data analysis chapters, this may not necessarily be the case in the context of Canada's SAWP.

The two concepts of performance and rupture are then examined as a way of developing a more precise and contextual frame for understanding how the presentation and potential interruption of prescribed subject positions may take place for SAWP workers in the dormitory/workplace. First using the ideas of Goffman, Bourdieu and Portilla, my interrogation of performance underscores how social interactions between workers in intimate spaces may shape the ways in which workers ultimately decide to respond to despotic forms of authority and control in the SAWP. In particular, the notion of performance as laid out in this chapter will provide a means for

examining how the complex relationships that develop over time between workers in both the worksite and the bunkhouse may play an integral role in upholding and maintaining acceptable ways of being. SAWP bunkhouse relations that take place in intimate spaces, often away from the gaze of employers and consular or ministry officials are key to understanding how and why forms of worker accommodation are enacted daily. While I argue in this section that these daily social interactions may indeed inhibit individual or collective moves toward freedom (Goffman, 1962), this section concludes with the observation that restrictive relationships do indeed have the potential to be overcome. The final concept of rupture plays a key role in developing an understanding of how this transgression may take place and thus helps to redefine the notion of emancipation in the context of Canada's SAWP. Focusing primarily on the work of contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière, this section reaffirms an understanding of workers' performance of inequality as grounded not in workers' *ignorance* of oppression, but rather in the daily embodied and sensual experiences of migration and despotic labour processes that influence workers' *belief* that things can be no other way. Rancière's position is thus a reformulation of the notion of emancipation as demystification. Rancière instead advances the notion that worker emancipation involves a more subtle transaction: the subversion of this belief and subsequently the performance of new political subjectivities grounded in a desire for freedom from domination and servitude. Integral to Rancière's position is how emancipation and subject formation is ultimately an aesthetic and pedagogical process. The chapter thus ends with the overall implications the notion of rupture may have on the theory and practice of adult education with migrant farm workers, with a particular focus on the use of art as emancipatory pedagogical tool for transgressing prescribed ways of being, saying and doing endemic to Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

## **Chapter 4: An Exploration of Migrant Worker Agency through Personal Narratives and Kinesthetic Inquiry: A Reflection on Methods<sup>xiv</sup>**

Within the migration studies literature, recent scholarship has applied an agential analysis to how the experiences of migrant workers themselves may shape our understanding of labour migration policies and practices. For example, Rodriguez and Schwenken (2013) inquire as to how “subjectivation processes and migrants’ positionality can contribute to a more differentiated understanding...” of work and migration (p. 378). An analysis of migrant subjectivity is thus an integral, and often overlooked, component to developing a more accurate understanding of the politics of race, immigration and citizenship in both migrant sending and migrant receiving countries (De Genova, 2009; Nyers, 2003; Rodriguez & Schwenken, 2013). In the words of De Genova (2009):

The subjectivity of migrant labour is quite material and practical, indeed corporeal. It remains an unsettling presence that persistently disrupts the larger stakes of securing the regime of capital accumulation. This subversive potential is characteristic of the social force of all labour, ever indeterminate in its centrality – as subject – *within yet against* capital. (p. 461)

In the Canadian context, Nyers (2003), whose work examines the political contestation practices of undocumented non-citizens, has portrayed the corporeality of migrant subjectivity as the potential for migrants to enact moments that “contest and reshape the traditional terms of political community, identity and practice” (pp. 1070-1071). For Nyers, these moments constitute breaks with habitus that mark the development of new subjectivities. Similarly, Rodriguez and Schwenken (2013) argue that attention should be paid to the ways that workers contest the production of the ‘ideal’ migrant subject position in current temporary foreign labour migration policies and practices. This research is primarily focused on the ways in which migrant subjectivities are fashioned by migrant workers’ negotiations of the challenges they encounter “on the journey to work” (Barber, 2008, p. 1268). Clearly, recognizing the need to examine the development of worker subjectivity in the wider context of the policies and practices associated with the SAWP requires a methodological approach that prioritizes worker voice. I have therefore attempted to design a research project that takes seriously migrant agency, subjectivity and embodiment. As such, I have incorporated an approach to knowledge production that

includes methods grounded in both a life history and personal narrative approach to qualitative research (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Maynes, Peirce, & Laslett, 2008) as well as methods that incorporate a more hands-on kinesthetic, embodied and arts-based approach to engaging research participants (Quinlan, 2009; Tofteng & Husted, 2011).

In this chapter I offer a conceptual and practical bridge between the contextual and theoretical explorations above and the analysis of workers' own voices that follow. This chapter is meant to guide the reader between these two distinct yet interrelated worlds – the theoretical and the empirical. The chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first and most elaborate section details my overall methodological and epistemological approach as well as a more applied discussion of methods and research design. This section focuses on the justification and practical dimensions of applying a personal narrative and kinesthetic approach to the study of migrant worker agency. This section also contains a sub-section on data analysis, in other words how I translated my raw data into a scholarly narrative. In the second section I offer a reflection on the political and ontological implications of engaging migrant workers in a protracted and participatory arts-based action research project. Left purposefully open-ended, this short reflection is meant to provoke questions related to framing the emancipatory goals and outcomes of an aesthetic and embodied approach to research with migrant workers. The final section highlights my own positionality with regards to the research and the research participants. In this section I emphasize my outsider status, but reflect on elements from my life and work history that complicate my position as an interloper with respect to Canada's SAWP.

### **A Personal Narrative and Kinesthetic Approach to Exploring Migrant Worker Agency**

#### **Life History/Personal Narrative**

On the one hand, this project follows in the methodological footsteps of recent research studies that apply an approach to the exploration of migrant identity formation and decision-making practices that is grounded in methods that highlight life histories and personal narratives (Erel, 2007; Ng, 2006; Shan, 2012). As I have discussed in more detail in the previous chapters, my research will emphasize how labour and (im)migration policies and practices influence SAWP workers' negotiations of the possible actions that could ameliorate negative workplace conditions and possibly challenge a restrictive immigration status. The structural vulnerabilities associated with temporary labour migration in Canada will thus be placed in the context of

workers' life histories, with a particular focus on respondents' experiences of work and migration. I have decided therefore to incorporate a life history/personal narrative approach to data collection that prioritizes workers' own characterizations of precariousness as it is experienced through sets of relational practices such as familial relations, co-worker and employer relations, economic needs and worker expectations (Gellatly et al., 2014; Maynes et al., 2008). In short, the assumption that migrant workers may themselves be active agents in the production of knowledge has grounded a research design in which I have incorporated an exploration of life history and personal narrative among SAWP workers in Ontario.

Cole and Knowles (2001) describe life history research as research which draws on "individuals' experiences to make broader contextual meaning" (p. 20). Ng (2006) describes this style of inquiry as "not aimed at getting simple answers, but... intended as a journey of recollection and reflection by the interviewee" (p. 2). In other words, the solicitation of stories in narrative form through the practice of life-history interviews and conversations captures "a retrospective first-person account of the evolution of an individual life over time and in social context" (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 4). Following Erel (2007), I argue that the practice of biographical research is particularly well suited to highlighting the agency and subjectivity of migrant workers. By approaching conversations with workers in such a way that could prioritize workers' own descriptions of life in the SAWP, I was able to focus on workers' perceptions of everyday forms of resilience and resistance (Katz, 2004; Scott, 1985). This provided a means of developing an understanding of the 'micropolitics of resistance' (Mills et al., 2012) as these may apply in the context of daily life in Canada's Temporary Foreign Workers Program. This approach provides a challenge to a narrower yet more recognized understanding of worker 'action' that is limited to overt and visible forms of action and resistance (Gellatly et al., 2014; Maynes et al., 2008). Such explicit forms of worker agency may include: filing a complaint with the Ministry of Labour (in either Ontario or a sending country), filing a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, taking part in a direct action, or even accessing informal help through existing labour groups or community organizations. In spite of important community-based and volunteer-led initiatives to develop a strong and unified migrant voice in the face of structural vulnerabilities (Basok, 2009; Encalada-Grez, 2006), prior research on the SAWP (Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2006) has shown that given the enormous constraints, most workers do not openly dissent. Instead of highlighting what workers *do not do* in the face of difficulties and constraints

at work, by applying a life history and personal narrative approach to my interviews, I was able to emphasize the actions that workers actually *do* in fact perform in their daily lives and place these in the contexts of workers' work and migration histories (Gellatly et al., 2014; Maynes et al., 2008).

### **Developing Narrative through Semi-Structured Interviews**

I developed an interview guide that focused on general themes common to workers' experiences. These were categorized according to a) the interviewee's general life/migration/work history context and b) the interviewee's daily experience of life as a migrant farm worker in Canada. The former category included questions related to: respondents' stories of deciding to come to Canada; their educational backgrounds; work and employment histories; migratory experiences prior to enlisting in Canada's SAWP; and familial relations, including workers' relationships to remittances and communicating with family. The latter category included questions related to: workplace and bunkhouse conditions; employer relations; co-worker relations; recruiter relations; relations with state-officials; and workers' responses to problems at work.

This interview guide was not used in the same way in each interview, and my interviews could be placed along a continuum of guided/researcher-driven on the one end of the spectrum and open-ended/respondent-driven on the other. The obvious constraint to conducting respondent-driven open-ended interviews was worker availability. SAWP workers work notoriously long hours. Often workers work 6.5 days a week with only Sunday afternoons free for non-work related activities. Workers often work 10-13 hours daily – sometimes more. The limited time to spend in an interview meant that some interviewees felt more comfortable being asked clear and concise questions to which they could provide clear and concise answers. This meant that some interviews that I conducted were more guided, less open-ended, shorter, and in general more straightforward. These interviews relied more heavily on my close use of the interview guide. Other interviewees were less guarded, and more interested in sharing their stories. These interviews were less guided and more open-ended; they also tended to be longer and much more respondent-driven. With regards to these interviews, respondents often focused on elements of my interview guide that they felt were particularly relevant to their experience. These interviews took on more of a story-telling quality. There were a few interviews in particular in which interviewees were clearly the ones guiding the interview process. In these interviews, I felt that

my job was of a gatherer of stories, and my task was merely to probe here or there for clarification or elaboration.

**A note on outreach and conducting interviews.**

In order to take advantage of the summer agricultural season when the largest numbers of migrant farm workers are actually in the country, initial outreach for worker interviews took place in April of 2011 and continued until October of 2011. My outreach activities included a) handing out flyers and talking to workers on Friday nights on sidewalks and in parking lots in areas most frequented by migrant farm workers on their weekly shopping night to town<sup>xv</sup>; b) putting up flyers in locations most frequented by migrant farm workers, such as ethnic-specific stores and the local English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom provided for free in the evenings by Frontier College, a nationally-based literacy organization and; c) presentations during Frontier College ESL classes in which workers were invited to contact me by phone if they were interested in participating in an interview. I also attended one political event organized by the migrant justice group Justicia for Migrant Workers in the summer of 2011, where I handed out flyers (three interview participants were recruited in this way). Interviewees were thus self-selected. I provided each interviewee with a short introduction to the research before they were asked to sign a consent form. Each respondent was guaranteed confidentiality. With the exception of two interviews conducted in English, all interviews were conducted in Spanish. Interviews took place at locations most convenient to the interviewee. These locations included: various interviewees' bunkhouses (n=11), the Frontier College office (n=8), my car (n=3), two local parks (n=2), a church basement (n=1), my home (n=1), and the interviewees' own home (n=1)<sup>xvi</sup>. All interviews were audio recorded.

**Kinesthetic Inquiry**

In the context of the SAWP, I argue that any examination of the 'micropolitics of resistance' needs to incorporate knowledge that is tacit, embodied, and not easily translated into words. Simply put, as manual labourers, SAWP workers spend the majority of their time engaging their bodies in a deeply kinesthetic activity which over time "becomes memory in our body" (Samudra, 2008, p. 665). Workers come to experience their lives in the SAWP through the everyday sensory experiences of work. In their very everydayness, these experiences are both fundamental to shaping workers' impressions of life in the SAWP and yet may be so familiar as to become implicit – almost invisible. In the words of Merleau-Ponty (1962): "sense experience

is that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting in our life” (p. 53). Day in and day out, workers’ bodies both adapt to and resist the daily pressures of the workday, and it was my impression in designing this project that these were potentially integral experiences that would be difficult to access through interviews alone. This is particularly acute given SAWP recruitment practices that target workers with the lowest possible levels of formal education who have experience working as an agricultural labourer. Given their work and education histories, SAWP workers may be more inclined to ‘think kinesthetically’ on the job, and may not be used to translating these experiences directly into words. I needed to integrate a research method that could engage participants at the level of their bodies in such a way that would facilitate access to these embodied memories.

Methodologically, this portion of my fieldwork is a combination of several distinct concepts, including: drama-based participatory research (Mienczakowski, 1999; Passila, Oikarinen, & Kallio, 2013; Quinlan, 2009; Tofteng & Husted, 2011), decolonizing education (Ng, 2011), and embodied ethnography (Samudra, 2008; Wacquant, 2004). From a methods perspective, this portion of my research incorporated the use of drama techniques developed by Brazilian theatre director and educator Augusto Boal as adapted from his renowned drama-based popular education system known as the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1985). This technique has been shown to be a productive method for developing a reflexive practice of knowledge production grounded in participants’ “immediate experience and direct experiment” (Quinlan, 2009, p. 117). For Quinlan, who has used the Theatre of the Oppressed in research with health care workers, this technique proved highly effective as a strategy for participatory engagement as “assumptions and interpretive categories, related to the social and material worlds of the constituent group, are made visible and critically reviewed by the participants” (p. 120). In the context of knowledge generation, this method has been said to be particularly good at “highlighting aspects of experience that had been in shadow, helping us to appreciate the drama and beauty of lives in our communities” (Brydon-Miller, Friedman, & Gaya, 2011). There is both an aesthetic and sensual quality to the process of theatre creation that I felt could be harnessed in my fieldwork with SAWP workers. In so doing, my intention was to attempt to create a research environment that could prioritize the embodied, difficult to access elements of workers’ experiences by highlighting a certain “sensitivity to the intuitive, the hither side of words” (Linds & Vettrano, 2008, p. 16).

The main concept that guides this part of the project is the idea of using respondents' actual bodies in research interactions as a way of helping people to examine and discuss bodily experiences and gestures and how these can inform our understanding of group habitus. Approaching the study of embodied knowledge kinesthetically is a direct response to the experiences of researchers who have "frequently run up against the limits of language for expressing embodied knowledge" (Samudra, 2008, p. 665). Developing an approach to research that provided a forum for workers to come together in small groups in order to investigate the themes under investigation through bodily movement provided a window for respondents to talk about everyday embodied habits, instead of avoiding rich "descriptions of their own kinesthetic practices" (p. 665). This approach to capturing respondents' embodied experiences of work and migration deepens my methodological commitment to prioritizing worker voice and experience. It is also complimentary to feminist scholarship that highlights how people experience oppression primarily through the body (hooks, 1994; Ng, 2011). In the words of bell hooks: only "the person who has the most power has the privilege of denying their body" (hooks, 1994, p. 137). She continues: "We must return to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated" (hooks, 1994, p. 139). Other feminist scholars, such as Nagar (2002) have explicitly discussed the use of political theatre – street theatre and folk performances in particular, in "claiming space, finding voice, gaining visibility, discovering power!" (p. 59). In her analysis of theatrical street performances by women in Northern India, she discusses how the use of popular forms of theatre among marginalized populations can serve as a "political, often militant" cultural intervention that can facilitate the politicization of people's struggles (pp. 59-60). Integrally, as I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 8 below, these forms of artistic expression can challenge the binary of public and private, and thus facilitate a transgression of accepted subject positions. In the words of Nagar – an examination of how popular theatre actors "deploy specific spaces and discourses allows us to explore the nuances and complexities associated with varied articulations of feminist politics" (p. 69). Approaching the body as a primary site of interrogation through drama creation and performance may provide a) a unique methodological tactic for developing a somatic narrative, and thus a more nuanced understanding of control, resilience and resistance among SAWP workers and b) a potential method for building solidarity and facilitating critical labour education among workers.

The use of the arts in qualitative research has been gaining legitimacy in recent years (Knowles & Cole, 2008). In the past decades the use of drama in particular has been gaining traction in this realm (Beck, Belliveau, Lea, & Wager, 2011; Norris, 2011; Thompson, 2003). In the words of Thompson (2003), "... theatre itself is the research process. It is a means for understanding, analysing, interpreting and proposing, done by people who occupy the ground" (p. 148).

Incorporating drama into kinesthetic inquiry involves integrating an aesthetic dimension as well that provided a unique way for research participants to more deeply examine their experiences in a creative, almost contingent fashion. This element is consistent with recent discussions occurring in the realm of popular education that describe democratic relations as a "clash of atoms" (Lewis, 2012, p. 37), largely inspired by the later writings of French philosopher Louis Althusser. Althusser (2006) posits an ontology grounded not in reason, but in chance encounters – the "infinitesimal *swerve*" of atoms colliding (p. 168). He describes a process of world-making contingent on a never-ending series of aleatory encounters that produce "a pile-up and the birth of a world" (p. 168). The aleatory encounter as theorized by Althusser defines the aesthetic dimension of incorporating theatre in the qualitative research arena. In the words of Thompson (2003), this aesthetic dimension

is a vital 'functional' part of the process of researching community problems. The aesthetic within the research method ensures that the investigation includes the non-linear, unpredictable, unsayable and visual as vital parts of the construction of the group's knowledge of the particular issue. It is a way of them interpreting the 'complex information' they have displayed and generated about their lives. (p. 163)

Often, the use of drama in qualitative research has been associated with the technique of 'performed ethnography' whereby research findings are developed into a script which is performed for an audience, typically of stakeholders (Conquergood, 1991; Mienczakowski, 1999; Rossiter & Godderis, 2011; Saldaña, 2003). More recent qualitative researchers have employed the use of drama, in particular techniques taken from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed toolkit, as a way of engaging research participants in the generation and exploration of qualitative data in the context of action research projects. In the words of Thompson (2003): "... the techniques of Boal although often portrayed as a means of intervening in community and group development,

should be seen as an invaluable tool for participatory research” (p. 153). This practice has been developing currency particularly among scholars who are interested in issues related to youth (Conrad, 2004; Gallagher & Wessels, 2013) and employment (Guard, Martin, McGauley, Steedman, & Garcia-Orgales, 2012; Quinlan, 2009; Tofteng & Husted, 2011). In the following paragraphs I will discuss in more detail how these elements were incorporated into my research design. Generally speaking, the drama workshop component of my research was organized into three phases: exploration, creation and performance. I will briefly touch on each before moving on to a discussion of how these were brought to my work with migrant workers.

The first phase was primarily focused on the use of Image Theatre (Perry, 2012a). In Image Theatre, participants use their own bodies and the bodies of other participants to explore the dynamics of a given issue. The technique is made up of a series of collective games and activities designed to create embodied experiences and dramatic images meant to engage participants in kinesthetic exploration and group discussions. A typical workshop typically involves participants creating a static image with their bodies meant to portray a representation of the phenomenon under investigation. In Image Theatre, activities take place in silence. By eliminating the use of words, participants’ are invited to focus more attention on non-verbal resources, including “their own bodies, their own perceptions of themselves through their bodies, and their interaction with others in the scene” (Linds, 2006, p. 116). Once an activity or image has been completed, the facilitator or researcher leads a group discussion meant to elicit responses related to the theme. With regards to my own research, this involved group discussions around the general topic of workers’ work/migration histories and the daily experience of life in the SAWP. This technique of eliciting responses is similar to the more established use of concept cards or photo elicitation as tools for engaging respondents in qualitative interviews (Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2010; Harper, 2002; Sutton, 2011). As a malleable form of communication in which meaning is both imparted and transformed through collective analysis (Boal, 2002), Image Theatre provided an effective means of eliciting workers’ reflections on embodied knowledge and experience.

The second phase involved the collective creation of scenarios developed out of workers’ initial explorations from the first phase. In this research segment, participants’ exploration and analysis of individual habits and gestures as these intersect with interviewees’ stories and experiences were developed into “a more complex, shaded and creative understanding of the way we perform

in everyday life” (Thompson, 2003, p. 156). This phase primarily incorporated collective improvisation and playbuilding (Norris, 2011). Starting from participants’ raw bodily experiences of things like control, discipline, conflict, resilience and resistance meant that research participants could create a collective narrative grounded in real experiences of daily life, and not based on generalized stereotypes. This was grounded in Norris’ (2011) claim that “... improvisation can be a powerful form of inquiry” (p. 31) in which participants may “phenomenologically reenact lived-experiences” (p. 34). One research participant (Mauricio) commented on how this phase of the research was particularly invigorating as he felt workers’ experiences were being portrayed truthfully. In his words, we were capturing “nuestro mero mole”, which roughly translates as “our real deal.” To place Mauricio’s comment in a methodological context, Norris (2011) describes the process of ‘playbuilding’ in qualitative research as a form of transformative and pedagogical research. He describes a process in which research participants and researchers alike “come to new personal insights as a result of listening to the stories of others and from improvisations that metaphorically examine life-experiences” (p. 32).

The final phase of drama-based kinesthetic inquiry involved performance. In this phase research participants were invited to perform their collectively created play for an audience of stakeholders – namely other migrant workers. This performance was followed by a post-performance discussion with audience members. Methodologically, this phase was grounded in Mienczakowski’s (1999) notion of “polyphonic voicing” (p. 145) whereby interviewees and other migrant workers could come together in a collective experiment of “informant validation” (p. 149). By combining the research process with the performance of participants’ stories, narrated in their own words and animated by their own gestures, the hope was to a) make the research process relevant to community stakeholders and b) provide a forum from which informants could critically examine and discuss preliminary research findings. This phase thus incorporated both dissemination and a continued interest in involving migrant workers in the emergent process of knowledge production. Audience members were invited to voice their “understandings, explanations, experiences and emotional location” thereby strengthening the findings by adding substance to personal narratives gathered through the interviews (p. 149). In the words of Mienczakowski: “Here expert informants assist in determining the accuracy and validity of the representations made—the performances will not be open to public scrutiny until a

form of consensus has been achieved with informants” (p. 150). Not only did the performance provide an opportunity to take the research out of the academy and into the community, it also offered a valuable opportunity for a wider group of research participants to critically engage with my initial representations of the data collected.

**Engaging workers through play.**

In addition to being invited to participate in an interview, during the outreach phase of my fieldwork, described above, workers were invited to participate in a series of drama-based workshops. From a logistical point of view, my incorporation of drama-based workshops was challenging. The first logistical hurdle I needed to overcome was my need for a space big enough and private enough to accommodate the sessions. In order to have the necessary space required to facilitate movement-oriented workshops with a group of workers, I decided to rent out a church basement on Sunday afternoons from April to September 2011. Luckily I found a church basement that had a basketball court, which meant that we had plenty of empty space to play and explore. The second logistical hurdle was much more daunting – the obstacle of workers’ interest and availability.

The primary outreach for the drama workshops was through Frontier College’s ESL classes. Many of these workers were accustomed to heading into town on their bicycles during their free time, and when I gave my initial outreach presentations I had the feeling that some students were intrigued by the idea of participating in a play. My strategy was to invite workers to the church basement on Sunday afternoons and then to wait for them to arrive. There was no RSVP necessary. At the beginning, this portion of my fieldwork was organized as a group drop-in. My idea was to hook interested workers with fun and interesting activities right from the start. As discussed above, SAWP workers have very little free time. As these sessions were scheduled for Sunday afternoons, I was painfully aware that my workshops were taking place during the most valuable and precious time for workers wanting to take advantage of what little time they had to take care of their non-work related needs and interests. My workshops were competing with activities such as socializing, shopping, communicating with family, laundry, rest, cooking, to name but a few. Luckily, I was able to eventually attract a core group of five workers as well as six other workers who attended intermittently.

A total of four workers participated in all three phases. During the consent process workers were made aware that I could not maintain complete confidentiality, as they would be interacting with peers in a group setting. I explained to workers that I was going to facilitate several workshops that would explore the themes as detailed above, namely a) the interviewee's general life/migration/work history context and b) the interviewee's daily experience of life as a migrant farm worker in Canada. I described how I was simultaneously conducting interviews and that every week I would share emerging themes from interviewees' narratives so that they could explore, comment and elaborate more fully on these stories. In the second phase images and discussions were developed into a play, entitled 'La Primera Temporada/The First Season'. Participants decided to focus their creation on the experiences of a worker new to the program, as they all agreed that a worker's early experiences in the program tended to produce the strongest and most long-lasting feelings and memories. The play followed the young SAWP protagonist through all stages of the program, from the initial recruitment, to on-the-job training, to dealing with a difficult employer, negotiating challenging relationships with co-workers and on to the final reporting stage with Ministry of Labour officials in the worker's home country. In the third and final stage the 20-minute play was performed for a group of invited guests, all migrant workers. The play was followed by a post-performance discussion with all audience members and actors. All workshops as well as the final performance were video recorded.

### **Data Analysis**

Once my fieldwork was completed, I proceeded to transcribe all data, including audio recordings of semi-structured interviews and video recordings of drama workshops. As Spanish is not my first language, and as most of my data is in Spanish, I hired native-Spanish speakers to transcribe most of my raw data. The purpose of which was to make sure that transcriptions were as accurate as possible. Once the data was transcribed, I uploaded all recordings and corresponding transcriptions into NVivo, a qualitative research data analysis software. The first step in data analysis was to code all of my interviews, workshops and post-performance discussion (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Lofland and colleagues (Lofland et al., 2006) describe the coding process as "sorting your data into various categories that organize it and render it meaningful from the vantage point of one or more frameworks or ideas" (p. 200). During this stage I returned to the raw data in order to listen and watch each interview and workshop while simultaneously performing a close reading of all transcripts. I began by seeking

out significant moments from my data: quotes, observations, incidents, and ideas. From here I began to compare and contrast these moments and ask myself as to why I considered these to be significant. This initial process involved incorporating an inductive and conceptual analysis to my data that in turn facilitated the creation and naming of categories, or themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 61-74). Given the complexity of the data that I gathered, especially with regards to the hours of respondent-driven interviews set against hours of open-ended group discussions and collective creation, my initial coding regime generated codes that did not neatly fit into any pre-determined social science framing. This corresponds to common methodological challenges as reviewed in the literature. In the words of Lofland et al. (2006): “the various situations and behaviours that are the object of your research are complex entities that require considerable time and attention in order to understand them in their own mundane terms” (p. 205). Themes therefore evolved over time, and the development of these themes helped to inform my wider literature review. The project as a whole has therefore been guided by a dialectical approach to developing themes and theory. This meant that the contextual and theoretical chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) were grounded in an emergent process of data analysis, which in turn helped to shape the formation of my subsequent detailed review of the data collected (Chapters 6, 7, and 8).

#### **A Note on the Political Ontology of the Research Encounter**

Thompson (2003) posits the argument that qualitative research that engages participants in creating theatre is by its very nature a type of ‘action research’, as in his words: “*Theatre is an action that is research*” (p. 148). It follows that engaging SAWP workers in a creative, embodied and protracted approach to qualitative social inquiry may have effects that go beyond simply discovering and describing the state of worker resilience and resistance. Having workers use their bodies analytically and aesthetically in order to create theatre in their free time is *in and of itself* a form of action – and indeed one that a) may have real and lasting effects on the world and b) need not be completely subordinated to the interests of ‘research’. The world-making capacities of research are not exclusive to forms of qualitative inquiry that prioritize participant voice and embodied knowledge, but indeed can be said of all forms of social inquiry. In the words of Law and Urry (2004), “... social inquiry and its methods are productive: they help to *make* social realities and social worlds. They do not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it” (pp. 390-391). They continue: “If methods also produce reality, then whatever we do,

and whatever we tell, social science is in some measure involved in the creation of the real. There is no innocence” (p. 404). In this section I will provide a brief reflection on some implications these insights may have in the context of this project.

As Beyes and Steyaert (2011) have recognized, experimental forms of action research that seek to involve research participants both politically and aesthetically are particularly suited to intervening on the social world. In the above description of my methods, I describe the use of drama with migrant workers as an effective means of engaging with tacit and embodied knowledge – knowledge that may be readily accessible to the body, but generally difficult to put into words. Indeed, much of the scholarly literature that has discussed the use of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of participatory-style research has focused on its instrumental value as a research ‘technique’ (Conrad, 2004; Quinlan, 2009). These scholars praise the Theatre of the Oppressed for its epistemological dexterity. What is underexplored in these accounts however is the ontological significance of employing a system like Boal’s in the service of action research. In other words, what is the potential capacity for artistic interventions and experimentations in research to “interfere” with what in previous chapters I have referred to as “what is visible and sayable” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Jacques Rancière, 1999)? Given the overall context of control and surveillance fundamental to Canada’s SAWP, what is the impact of employing a research method that engages research participants so directly and with the intention of artistic experimentation? Developed in the context of authoritarian rule in 1950s Brazil, Boal’s method of participatory theatre was meant to be a world-making process designed to provoke and even destabilize the existing political order. What are the political or ontological implications of marrying the Theatre of the Oppressed with qualitative research in the context of Canada’s SAWP?

The use of the arts in qualitative action or participatory-style research by its very nature is disruptive of the “purely technical and instrumental notion of methods, their rules, and criteria. It posits action research as a creative and potentially political practice of world-making” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011, p. 104). In the context of this research project, this is a crucial observation. As such, using art in action research is more than just the use of creative technical methods but also about “understanding, reflecting upon, and experimenting with the kind of inventions and interventions that researchers participate in” (p. 104). Taken seriously, an aesthetic and sensual

approach to participatory research must entail a reflection on not only the technical outcomes of the research, but crucially, the emancipatory impacts as well. An active and participatory approach to research must therefore be perceived as a “form of engagement - of invention and intervention” and not just as the application of instrumental rules and criteria (p. 104). More than just engaging workers kinesthetically in order to better understand embodied practice at the level workers’ daily lives, my research strives to mobilize a new kind of ‘research assemblage’ and in so doing attempts to apprehend a level “‘actionable knowledge’ that is able to capture the richness of the world” (p. 110). As I have examined in the previous chapter, engaging in aesthetic practice, particularly at the scale of the body, has the ability to disturb the distribution of the sensible, and in terms of its political impact, must be judged accordingly.

As discussed above, the application of life history and kinesthetic inquiry as the epistemological approaches to developing research outcomes is meant to cultivate a more complete and nuanced understanding of worker subjectivity. That notwithstanding, in the chapters that follow I will also attempt to speak to the political and ontological dimensions of employing a participatory arts-based approach to research with migrant farm workers.

### **A Note on My Positionality Vis-à-Vis this Research**

In this final section I will offer a reflection on my own relationship to the research and to the research participants. A researcher’s location is about more than just saying who you are and where you are from. Location is about personal contexts, relationships, a critical understanding of colonialism and oppression, a commitment to decolonization, anti-racism, solidarity and should reflect a “dynamic and transformative representation” of a researcher’s socio-political position (Absalon & Willet, 2005, p. 110). As such, a researcher’s open exploration of their own location, or positionality, is a necessary step to engaging in dialogue with marginalized and racialized communities. In other words, “there needs to be a congruent examination of the meanings attached to our social identities in historical moments that are of strategic significance” (Herising, 2005, p. 135). A researcher’s explicit discussion of his or her positionality lays bare the researcher’s stake in the community and in the research and thus better enables trusting relationships to develop and better ensures accountability to the process and outcomes of the research project. In a word, a researcher’s reflecting on and exposing their location is an integral step toward letting the community decide whether or not the researcher is connected and

committed enough to those he or she is researching to engage in research. In the words of Absalon and Willet (2005): “If you want to do ethical research that accurately represents who it is for and who it represents, then you have to be positioned in it and connected to it” (p. 104).

I first became connected to SAWP workers in the summer of 2003, the first season that I worked as a Frontier College labourer-teacher. In this role, I worked alongside migrant farm workers from Mexico on tobacco farms and fruit orchards in Southern Ontario. I lived in worker dormitories (bunkhouses), and taught ESL and basic literacy in what little time I had free. In the winter seasons I spent time with my co-workers and their families in Mexico. I did this work for three years before deciding to pursue a master’s degree in Adult Education and Community Development at OISE/UT, where I completed a thesis that examined the informal learning of Frontier College labourer-teachers (Perry, 2008, 2013). Once I started to steep myself in the extant scholarly literature on the SAWP, I realized that my direct and very intimate experiences with workers themselves provided me with a unique perspective on the everyday lives of workers – a perspective that was largely lacking from academic accounts. These work and research experiences have led me to the present investigation.

With regards to my own positionality vis-à-vis Canada’s SAWP I am by all means an outsider – albeit an outsider “with a twist” (Allen, 2006, p. 168). I am not a migrant worker, and in fact as a ‘native-born’ Canadian, I do not have any personal experience negotiating Canada’s immigration system. Not only that, but as a doctoral student at the University of Toronto, I am a highly educated, not to mention ‘white’ man from the Global North. Needless to say, I am very much an outsider among SAWP workers. That notwithstanding, there are three elements from my own life history that contribute to my having a “twist” that complicates my outsider status. First are my own bodily experiences and memories of having worked on farms and lived in bunkhouses among migrant farm workers from Mexico in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Second, I spent these agricultural off-seasons visiting co-workers in Mexico. During this time I developed more intimate relationships with workers and their families – relationships that I continue to maintain. Over time, this knowledge has also become embodied, and is communicated quite naturally through gestures and linguistic mannerisms that (Mexican) workers would associate with rural Mexico. These first two elements are crucial to developing fluid and trusting relationships with workers. When I introduce myself to a worker, I am able to talk about my previous work as a

farm worker and bunkhouse dweller in such a way that quickly dissolves the otherwise expected social barriers. Indeed, this is related to a major finding from my masters' research, namely that working and living in solidarity with workers obscures the status of 'outsider'. Two quotes from former Frontier College labourer-teachers taken from the data collected during my masters' research exemplify this finding:

The fact that we were co-workers gave us an instant bond. Even though you can never get past the fact that you are an outsider, you can share the experience that you are working the same job, especially since it's a hard job, and you are all experiencing the same aches and rashes. (Barbara)

And

I feel it in my body, in the aches and pains and difficulties. Actually doing the work and having injuries to show for it act as reminders of the experience in a way that intellectually I don't think I'd have gotten if I had just worked on these issues in an intellectual way. (Anna)

For Samudra (2008) and Wacquant (2004) this type of 'insider' knowledge is crucial to developing a research agenda that incorporates the engagement of research participants' as embodied 'knowers'. French sociologist Loïc Wacquant, who became a boxer during his investigation into boxing culture in Chicago makes the claim that in order to understand the world of boxing, one must "immerse oneself in it firsthand, to learn it and experience its constitutive moments from the inside. Native understanding of the object is here the necessary condition of an adequate knowledge of the object" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 59). He continues to say that the culture of boxing "is formed of a diffuse complex of postures and (physical and mental) gestures that . . . exist in a sense only in action, and in the traces that this action leaves within (and upon) bodies" (p. 59). As I argue above, the same can be said of agricultural labour and the living-at-work arrangement fundamental to the SAWP experience. For me, and on a very personal scale, the experience of living and working with migrant farm workers was and continues to be life altering and politically transformational. Having access to a host vivid

memories from this time in my life meant that as a researcher I had access to *some* shared, though of course *very limited*, somatic knowledge of living and working in an SAWP workplace. Samudra (2008) refers to this type of ethnographic positionality as ‘thick participation’, as it involves the “physical memory, performed repetitively” that enacts “sociocultural meanings” for participating researchers (p. 667).

The third element is my political and theoretical commitment to better understanding and improving the lives and working conditions of workers at the intersection of precarious employment and precarious immigration status. This is demonstrated through my published work, both academic (Perry, 2012b) and non-academic (Perry, 2007) and my volunteer work with the community-based migrant rights organization Justicia for Migrant Workers (Justicia for Migrant Workers, 2014), with whom I have facilitated popular education workshops and helped to organize a tour of important sites along the Underground Railroad with SAWP workers in 2011. Woven together, these elements produce a unique social location from which I am able to critically reflect on my own positionality in relation to the SAWP and from which I may endeavour to justify my work to SAWP workers.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided a detailed reflection on my approach to conducting social science research with and about migrant farm workers. In short, this chapter has described an attitude toward research that prioritizes worker voice through personal narrative and embodied engagement. Generally speaking, I have portrayed a method that incorporates a number of different approaches to qualitative research, including personal narrative, life history, kinesthetic inquiry, arts-based methods, participatory research, and action research. These different approaches have been intertwined in this project for the purposes of not only gathering data, but also to engage workers in a hands-on project grounded in critical reflection and world-making. In addition to providing a platform from which workers may participate more fully in the research process, to a certain extent, this project also offers workers an opportunity to intervene in the distribution of the sensible. As such, methodologically, this project is not only grounded in an epistemological commitment to engaging workers as embodied ‘knowers’, but also plays with the political and ontological potential for rupture and emancipation – and may offer a small yet

unique disruption in the “order of the visible and the sayable” characteristic of Canada’s SAWP (Rancière, 1999, p 29).

## **Chapter 5: Participant Demographics and Brief Sketches of Key Players**

In this short chapter, I provide a snapshot of my research participants. I begin by providing a brief demographic description of who participated in this project, and in what ways workers chose to participate. This macro-scale introduction to my participants is followed by concise, yet detailed introductions to four key research participants (the names of these participants have been bolded in the chart below).

### **A Note on Demographics**

Through my interviews and theatre-based collective creation workshops I engaged with a total of 30 research participants, both men (n=26) and women (n=4)<sup>xvii</sup> (see Table 1). Twenty-five of these participants were seasonal contract workers engaged in Canada's SAWP. SAWP participants came from Mexico (n=23) and Jamaica (n=1), as well as Trinidad and Tobago (n=1). One participant, originally from Mexico, had been a participant in the SAWP, but left the program and remained in Canada and at the time of the interview was drifting from job to job. The remaining nine participants had non-seasonal agricultural stream temporary foreign worker contracts. These participants were from Guatemala (n=5). While Guatemalan workers' contracts are longer than those granted to SAWP workers from Mexico and the Caribbean, for all intents and purposes, their experiences in Canada are similar. All workers that took part in this research could be said to participate in the living-at-work arrangement examined in previous chapters. Given my positionality with regards to my experiences working with Mexican SAWP workers, my outreach endeavours were much more successful with Hispanic workers as opposed to Caribbean workers. At the time that I conducted my fieldwork, participants were employed in the greenhouse sector (n=21), tender fruit (n = 7), vegetable packing (n=4) and tobacco (n=1). The participant sample contains a wide variety of work experience in Canada's temporary foreign worker program. This includes workers who were engaged in their first contract at the time of my field work, and on the other end of the spectrum, one worker who had been participating in the SAWP for a total of 27 years. At the time my field work was conducted, among my sample group the overall average of time spent working as a temporary foreign worker in Canada was 10 seasonal contracts. When added together my data can be said to represent a total of approximately 270 seasons, or in other words, roughly 165 years of experience working as a temporary foreign worker in Canada's agricultural sector.

**Table 1: Research Participants in Alphabetical Order<sup>xviii</sup>**

Name	Male/Female	Age	Country of Origin	Number of Seasons	Interview Y/N	Weekly Workshops Y/N
Alvaro	M	35	Mexico	7	Y	N
Benjamin	M	49	Mexico	13	Y	N
Celso	M	62	Mexico	26	Y	N
Consuela	F	60	Mexico	18	N	Y
Cristóbal	M	38	Mexico	10	Y	N
Eliseo	M	35	Mexico	9	Y	N
Emiliano	M	43	Mexico	17	Y	N
Emilio	M	61	Mexico	27	Y	N
Emmanuel	M	26	Guatemala	2	Y	N
<b>Enrique</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>
Hernan	M	22	Guatemala	1	Y	N
Hidalgo	M	26	Mexico	2	Y	N
Horario	M	23	Mexico	7	Y	N
Ian	M	44	Mexico	17	Y	N
<b>Ignacio</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>
Ines	F	40	Mexico	11	N	Y
<b>Iván</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>4<sup>xix</sup></b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Javier	M	45	Mexico	11	N	Y
Jeronimo	M	46	Mexico	9	Y	N
<b>Joaquín</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>
John	M	48	Trinidad and Tobago	13	Y	N
Lauro	M	27	Guatemala	2	Y	N
Lourdes	F	40	Mexico	11	Y <sup>xx</sup>	Y
Lucas	M	40	Guatemala	2	Y	N
Matias	M	24	Mexico	2	Y	N
Mauricio	M	26	Mexico	1	Y	Y
Montenegro	M	28	Guatemala	4	Y	N
Natalia	F	45	Mexico	11	N	Y

Robert	M	27	Jamaica	2	N	Y
Ruben	M	38	Mexico	5	Y	N

In accordance with the various research methods employed in this project, not all participants engaged equally with the project, or indeed in the same ways. Most workers decided to participate in an interview only (n=21), while some workers participated in both an interview as well as theatrical creation and performance (n=5), while still others preferred to be involved in only the latter without participating in a formal one-on-one interview (n=5). Of the 10 participants who were involved in theatrical creation and performance during my field work, these would normally manage their weekly participation alongside a busy work schedule that only provided a minimal amount of free time. As such, my weekly workshops were competing for attention against things like English as a Second Language classes, talking to family members on the phone or over Skype, doing laundry, preparing meals for the week, shopping for groceries, sending remittances, or just relaxing. As a result, attendance during these sessions was unpredictable. While one participant did attend every weekly session, most participants managed their participation according to their availability in any given week. On average, these weekly sessions involved roughly 3-4 workers regularly. In addition to these worker participants, my weekly sessions also involved the participation of one worker advocate from a local community-based organization. Her responsibility was to take on acting roles as needed, depending on the characters and scenarios that workers developed. In addition to the breakdown of my interview and workshop participants, the project also involved the participation of a small audience who were invited to engage with the final performance that took place at the end of my fieldwork. The audience for this performance was made up of a carefully selected group of guests who were invited by my workshop participants. In total, there were 25 audience members. Audience members gave verbal consent to participate in this project, and their names were not collected. Six of these participated in an interview, and 19 did not. Of these 25 audience members, eight participated in a 60-minute post performance discussion on the process and content of the play.

In order to provide a bit of contextual detail to my upcoming data chapters, I will provide a brief introduction to four key participants from my field research: Enrique, Ignacio, Iván, and Joaquín. I am well aware that the selection of these four participants is heavily weighted toward one

particular group, namely male SAWP workers from Mexico. This is largely consistent with my fieldwork generally and indeed to the demographic outline of migrant agricultural work in the town of Leamington, Ontario, where I conducted my research. That being said, I have chosen to provide a brief sketch of these four workers in particular not because of their position vis-à-vis the temporary foreign worker program per se, but rather in recognition of their participation vis-à-vis this project. Each of these four participants has helped to shape the contours of how this project has developed, and consequently of the knowledge produced.

Not all of these participants were involved in exactly the same way in this project, and indeed each had their own reasons for wanting to participate. Of the four participants highlighted in this chapter, only one (Iván), did not participate in the drama-based workshops. Iván was the only participant that was recruited through a flyer, which was posted in a local laundromat. No participant was more eager to tell his story than Iván. More than any other participant, Iván felt that he had a story to tell, and he wanted to tell it. By chance, Iván and I had met each other in 2003 which I was a Frontier College labourer-teacher. He was my student at the time. We didn't realize this until after he had approached me to participate in an interview. Once we made this realization, we both felt more comfortable communicating with each other. As a result of this connection, we ended up spending a lot of time together throughout my fieldwork. Iván is a very sociable person, and he invited me to be a part of his wider circle of friends. As I first met Iván during his very first season as an SAWP worker I felt that had a personal connection to the stories that he was telling in his interview. I had a distinct memory of both Iván as a young rookie SAWP worker and Iván as a more seasoned worker that I got to know in 2011. I feel that our relationship helped to give Iván the confidence to tell his story in a slower and more intimate way than would normally be expressed in a research interview. While the quotes that I use are from the recorded interview, my sketch of Iván is grounded in a more protracted relationship that continues to this day. More than anything, Iván was intent on having his story told.

The other three workers presented here, Enrique, Ignacio and Joaquín, were all eager participants in the drama workshops and the final performance. Unlike Iván, these three participants did not decide to participate in this project because they felt that they had a particular story that they needed to tell. Rather, the common motivating thread for these three participants was curiosity in both the research process and the collective creation process. All three talked about their desires

to have a new experience, make new friends and do something creative. All of them discussed how they never thought that they would ever participate in play-making, especially in Canada, and they were intrigued. Also unlike Iván, none of these participants felt that they had anything of particular importance to impart or contribute to the project. In a sense, these workers' openness to the project and to the process of conducting research in such an active and collective way facilitated the group process work in such a way that did not prioritize any one worker's story, meaning that that no one individual felt the need to take up a lot of space in the group. The result was the development of a group of research participants that was open to the process of sharing stories and being vulnerable.

### **Brief Sketches of Four Key Players<sup>xxi</sup>**

#### **Enrique<sup>xxii</sup>**

Enrique is from a rural area in the Mexican state of Yucatan. He speaks Mayan as a first language, though he is fluent in Spanish. Similar to other workers described in this chapter, Enrique did not make a living as an agricultural worker before coming to Canada. Rather, he spent his working years prior to enlisting in Canada's SAWP as a musician. Before coming to Canada Enrique toured throughout Mexico with a Christian folk group, and so felt as though he was used to living away from his family for extended periods of time. Before coming to Canada, Enrique had never worked outside of Mexico, and it never crossed his mind that he ever would. Though he did not have agricultural work experience, he had inherited an *ejidatario* identity, originally issued by the federal government to Enrique's grandfather, which meant that he could prove to Ministry officials that he was the inheritor of an *ejido*. The term *ejido* refers the appropriation and division of former haciendas into parcels of communal agricultural land that were redistributed to indigenous and landless farmers as a part of post 1910 revolution land reform policies and similar reforms which were aggressively pursued during the presidency of Lazaro Cardenas in the late 1930s.<sup>xxiii</sup> However, unlike his grandfather, for Enrique being an *ejidatario* played little to no role in the development of his identity or in how he had lived his life up to that point. So, in spite of his formal identity as an *ejidatario*, Enrique did not identify as a farmer, and most integrally, did not have the calluses that SAWP recruiters seek out as a tell-tale sign of a life devoted to agricultural fieldwork. Ministry of Labour officials in Mexico City questioned Enrique directly about his lack of calluses during the SAWP screening and recruitment process. A key moment in Enrique's interview occurred when he described how he

decided to perform an act of subordination by bowing his head and silently deferring to the official during this interrogation. He said, in his own words: “‘Please sir, we are over there in our town growing cilantro’. And I’ve seen it done, so I made it up. I told him how we grow cilantro, radish, tomatoes and papaya. [laughs].” He explained his lack of calluses to Ministry officials by claiming he was most often in charge of irrigation, and so had little physical interaction with the plants themselves. To a large extent, this moment encapsulates Enrique’s attitude and approach to his overall participation in the SAWP, as the main theme that runs throughout Enrique’s story is his willingness to subvert or challenge authority in the face of situations that he considers to be unfair.

At the time of my fieldwork, it was Enrique’s ninth season as an SAWP worker in Canada. He was working as a greenhouse worker, and previous to this he had worked with field vegetables in both British Columbia and Alberta, and so was able to comment on a wide variety of experiences in the program. He has since been sent to work on a cranberry farm in Quebec. Enrique lived in a small and crowded dormitory on his employer’s property. This dormitory was located near the greenhouse operation, in view of his employer’s home. Enrique described his living quarters as inadequate, and described how the basement – which was where his bedroom was located, would flood during rainstorms. He described how he and his bunkmates would be expected to drain the water themselves. What is most striking about Enrique was the enthusiasm he displayed when telling the story of his life in the SAWP, including for example: his motivations for applying to the program, how his family relationships impacted and continue to impact his decision to migrate, and how he navigates oftentimes difficult relations with employers, officials, and fellow co-workers. Most importantly, while it is clear that he has experienced many hardships over his nine years of participating in the SAWP, Enrique never portrayed himself to me as a ‘victim’. On the contrary, throughout his interview he discussed in detail a number of examples of when he responded overtly to situations he felt represented instances of personal injustice. Unlike many other interviewees, Enrique had no problem confronting the employer directly when he felt an injustice had occurred. On this, he sums up his attitude thusly:

I am not afraid of any employer. If the boss comes and yells at me, if I feel he is not in the right, I’ll answer back. But... if he is in the right and I made a mistake,

then I also have to bow to him [doblarne], because he is the one who makes the rules [lo quemanda].

As an example, Enrique recounts how he has regularly confronted employers in the following ways:

I threw the clippers in his direction and stepped towards him. I said: ‘Look. You are not going to scare me. There are a lot of farms and a lot of places where I can work. You are not the only farmer around here. If you want to, send me back to Mexico right now’.

That said, unlike Iván who tried to incite workers to resist their employer, Enrique did not discuss the collective implications of injustice within the SAWP, but rather framed these as personal or individual experiences of injury.

Even though he joined the collective creation workshop phase of this project half-way through the summer, Enrique became an essential participant in this project, agreeing to tackle the role of the protagonist. When Enrique decided to join our group, much of the collective creation work was completed, and we were just beginning the rehearsal stages. Mauricio, the participant who had been helping to develop the role of the protagonist had decided to end his participation in the workshops because he did not feel comfortable performing in front of an audience and Enrique agreed to take on this role. Though he had no previous experience acting, Enrique brought a vital enthusiasm to our process.

My interview with him took place in a public park and I did not visit with him in his bunkhouse, as visitors were not allowed in his bunkhouse.

### **Ignacio**

Ignacio was born in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. While Ignacio was born in a rural agricultural area, his parents moved to Mexico City in search of a better life when Ignacio was 11 years old. Ignacio therefore did not have any agricultural work experience before entering the SAWP. He had worked for a private transportation company in Mexico City for many years before entering the program. Ignacio began his working life when he was a teenager, when he began to work as a fare collector on buses in Mexico City. In the following years, Ignacio worked his way up to bus

driver and ultimately to dispatcher. Similar to the other participants described in this chapter, Ignacio overtly lied to recruitment officials in order to gain entry into the program. In his own words:

They gave us a form and they asked us to fill it in. And right there in the form it said, ‘do you know how to grow beans, corn, squash, wheat, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers and onions?’ Well no, I didn’t know any of that, but I marked ‘yes, yes, yes...’ ‘What are you’, they asked. “Well, of course I am a day labourer. Sometimes I work in this, sometimes in that, sometimes here, sometimes there, whatever.’ I could give them a vague idea even though I’ve never done it.

Since Ignacio’s birth certificate was from rural Oaxaca, he was able to convince Ministry officials that he had experience in farm work, even though he had none. For Ignacio, the primary motivation for coming to Canada was to improve his family’s financial situation. During this time, he says:

I was in a very bad situation. I didn’t have anything. In the place we were renting we had no services: no telephone, no refrigerator. We had a stove, but a very small one. We had no furniture except for the bed, a small chest of drawers, a small table and a few chairs.

During the course of my field work, Ignacio was planning on retiring from the program the following year, but in the few months after he returned to Mexico in 2011, his wife was diagnosed with cancer, and she required expensive treatment. He decided to continue working in the program in order to pay for these treatments.

In the 20 years since first joining the SAWP, Ignacio had worked in several workplaces in Alberta, Quebec and Ontario. At 60 years of age, the primary themes that run through my many interactions with Ignacio are his extensive experience in the program, his experiences of competing with younger workers, the sense of frustration that this evoked for him and his continued interest in seeking out new learning experiences. Ignacio places a lot of emphasis on the lack of freedom for workers in the SAWP. On a number of occasions, he expressed with emphasis and without hesitation that there is no place outside the realm of control of employers

and officials, and no area in which workers have independent control over their everyday lives. Despite his overwhelming sense of incarceration, Ignacio claims that he did not personally have examples of negative experiences having occurred to him during his 20 years in the program. In spite of this, Ignacio often talked about experiences that to an outsider could only be described as at the very least difficult. A short list of these experiences reveals Ignacio's vast optimism in the face of difficult workplace situations. For example: while working in Alberta, Ignacio experienced the death of a co-worker who fell while working and broke his neck; in Quebec he experienced the death of a prominent community activist and close friend; more recently in his Ontario workplace he witnessed racial harassment on the part of his employer toward a Caribbean co-worker<sup>xxiv</sup> and aggravated conflicts between co-workers in his bunkhouse, including an assault with a knife and a death threat. The latter events resulted in the intervention of Mexican consular officials, who Ignacio claims told all of the workers that if they did not 'calm down' they would all be sent back to Mexico.

At the time of my fieldwork, Ignacio lived in a dormitory a distance away from the greenhouse, though still on his employer's property. While he was living in an all-Mexican bunkhouse, his dormitory was located next to two other worker dormitories, one occupied by St. Lucian workers and the other by Jamaican workers. While Ignacio did not discuss in much detail the individual relationships that he developed with fellow bunkmates, he did place a lot of emphasis on the need to spend as much time as possible outside of the dormitory. Ignacio talked about the dormitory as a place that at least on a more symbolic level, represented a certain lack of freedom. Regardless of the weather, Ignacio prioritized trips to town, a 30-minute bike ride or 1 hour walk from his bunkhouse. These difficult moments notwithstanding, the overall theme that Ignacio felt most affected the daily lives of SAWP workers was the pressure to produce. This is a theme that runs throughout all of my participant narratives, but it is particularly emphasized by Ignacio, who felt that over the years he had lost the strength and will to work at the level he felt was expected of him and his co-workers. Ignacio felt as though items such as the intense pressure to produce in tandem with the realities of bunkhouse living contributed to a culture of competition and distrust that unfairly targeted older workers. As will be discussed in more detail below, this is not an opinion that is universally shared.

Ignacio played a central role in the collective creation and performance elements of my fieldwork. While Ignacio was a musician who would often sing and play guitar for his friends, he had never participated in a community-based art project prior to his participation in this project. Ignacio was primarily motivated to participate in this project out of a desire to “be curious. I like to try different things; new things. It was something I had never tried before and I wanted to experiment.” Ignacio and Enrique were best friends.

### **Iván<sup>xxv</sup>**

Iván had been to college where he studied as a book-keeper and also had some training and work experience as a computer hardware technician before entering the SAWP in 2003. Though he was from a rural area in the Mexican state of Guerrero, Iván had never worked as an agricultural worker. Iván claims that he was able to convince Ministry officials because he took an agronomy class in high school, and so knew some of the basics of growing food. Here is how he tells the tale of his experience at the Ministry of Labour.

When the official came, she said “ok guys, I wanna tell you...” We were like 150 guys, people who are drivers, who work in taxis, people who work in construction... she was naming all the professions. “I don't want those people, I just want the people who really works on the fields. I don't want to waste your time guys, so please, because I will check every single person who stays.” And I saw some guys standing and leaving. I thought, “I gotta take the risk, if I really want to go, I gotta take the risk.” And I stayed. So she looked at my hands. If you look at my hands, they're clean, they're not rough like the other guys. She looked at me, she touched my hands, she said, “are you really a worker, a field worker?” I said, “yeah.” She said, “what you guys produce in your region, where you come from?” “Well we produce this, we produce that...” I was telling them the produce that we do. She said, “ok, tell me how's the process on the corn? How is the process on this?” But when I was in high school, I took that class, the first year. So I knew the process, but I never did it...

Iván spent the next four years as an SAWP worker. He spent the first three years in a large tomato greenhouse in the town of Leamington, Ontario and his final season on a vineyard in the Niagara Region of Ontario. Iván never felt as if he really fit in, and claims to have always felt

like an outsider among his co-workers. For him, the most crucial decision that he made was to focus on learning English. He says:

I had a burning desire to learn English. So every time when we finish, instead going in the house, and lay down on the bed, thinking crazy, or waiting for the phone, or cooking, I just grab my bike and went to the downtown to learn English. When I understood more English, actually when I learned all my rights as a worker, and the conditions that they have us in the... there were things that I didn't like. So then I had to do something... and I was telling you that when I met guys that they said they have been here for 18, 20 years, some of them 24 years... I said to myself I'm not gonna be in the program 24 years, doing the same thing for 24 years. I'm not.... I think so I'm capable for more than that.

During his third year working in the tomato greenhouse he developed a reputation for complaining about working conditions and was not asked to return the following year. In his fourth year the Ministry of Labour in Mexico sent him to an Ontario vineyard. When he arrived at his new workplace, he was not happy about the working and living conditions. For example, Iván reports on how the worker housing was overcrowded and dilapidated, workers had to pay for the use of kitchen utensils, the bunkhouse water was contaminated and not fit to drink, workers were only allowed visitors on Sunday evenings and they were not permitted to leave farm property except with employer permission on Sundays, and even then were expected to be back to the farm by 3pm, when the farmer would perform a weekly headcount. He was told by his co-workers not to complain, as the employer did not like workers who could speak English and that he would be sent back to Mexico if he did. Iván decided to complain directly to his employer and also encouraged his co-workers to do the same. He told his co-workers:

The way he is treating you, I don't know why you guys are still here, there is so much other places where you can work and you can get more pay and get less stress and with less killing yourself, because you guys killing yourself here.

And he told his employer: "I think we are your workers, we are not your slaves, and you got to give us what we need." Iván was immediately fired and put on a plane back to Mexico.

When he arrived in Mexico City, Iván presented himself to Ministry of Labour officials in order to discuss what had happened, as per SAWP policy. Ministry officials told him that he was a troublemaker and that if he wanted to return to Canada, he would have to wait in line behind 1,200 other recruits. This situation took place before Canada placed visa restrictions on Mexican tourists, and Iván decided to take what little money he saved on the vineyard and buy a plane ticket back to Toronto. He explains:

I had my passport, and I knew that I don't need any visa to go through immigration so all that I need to do is answer the right way on the questions. So they came when I went through and they asked “when's the last time that you were here?” “30 days ago” (laughs). And they looked at my profile, and I didn't lie, I think that that's the principle thing; that you don't lie to them. And they asked, “are you gonna stay in a hotel, or you wanna stay with friends?” “Ahh, I will stay with friends, I have friends.” “You have any address, phone numbers?” And I get the address for like 5 friends over here, that's the good thing when you have friends. Yeah, it helps you, the full address, phone numbers, names. And they say, “ok, enjoy your stay, enjoy your time.” And that was it.

On his arrival back in Canada, Iván managed to find an entry-level job in a warehouse back in Leamington. Eventually, Iván applied for an inventory counting position in the warehouse where he worked. This is how he describes his interview:

...they ask me what is my experience back home [in Mexico]. But the good this is they said we need someone that is good with numbers and we need someone with very good English. So I think that was the thing helped me a lot, because I had both what they required and I had very good experience because when I was working in my country 4, 5 years I was doing accounting, because that's my speciality, accounting with computers.

Eventually, Iván did his own research on the internet and convinced his employer to provide him with a contract and a job offer so that he could return to Mexico in order to apply for a work visa. After returning to Mexico and negotiating the work visa application process, he returned to

Canada to reside and work legally – outside of the SAWP program. In the months directly prior to this interview, Iván's visa had expired and he was given notice to return to Mexico.

Iván claims that his participation in the SAWP is responsible for the break-up of his family in Mexico. Since returning to Canada as a non-SAWP worker he met a co-worker in the packing warehouse where he worked. She was from the Philippines and was participating in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program as a low-skilled worker. Since meeting, they moved in together and started a family. They had one son together and at the time of these interviews, their son was one year old.

Iván participated in an interview. I also conducted many informal visits to his home in Leamington. Since my interview with him, his work visa expired, yet he remained in the country. His partner found work as a temporary foreign worker in Alberta, and he moved there with her and their son. He has since been deported to Mexico and has been separated from his family in Canada.

### **Joaquín**

Joaquín was raised in a rural region in the southern state of Chiapas. Joaquín has agricultural work experience, has completed high school and has several years of professional private sector work experience. Joaquín spent his formative years working on his family's land and very much identifies as a rural farmer. On this level Joaquín fits the preferred profile of SAWP recruits. However, Joaquín also completed high school in a medium-sized city in Chiapas, where he received a technical diploma in accounting. This modest level of formal education meant that he was able to find skilled work in his field. Joaquín spent 10 years working as both a book-keeper and a salesman in the construction industry, 8 years of which were spent in Mexico City. Joaquín's experiences working in both rural agricultural and urban professional settings translate to his relative comfort in navigating a variety of work environments and workplace relationships. When he first applied to Canada's SAWP, he did not share his prior education or professional work experience with Ministry officials, and instead focused on his extensive experience working in the fields. He first came to Canada as an SAWP worker in 2000. Aside from a short three-month contract on a tobacco farm in his first season, Joaquín has been working in the same cucumber greenhouse in Leamington since 2001.

Joaquín's confidence and his capacity to gain the trust of his employer have resulted in his ability to navigate a more comfortable position for himself at work. The majority of SAWP workers that participated in this project discussed how their day-to-day workplace duties revolved around repetitive manual tasks that did not tend to change much throughout the duration of the agricultural season. In comparison Joaquín consistently referred to his job title as "the supervisor of plants", and regularly discussed the level of responsibility that he held and variety of tasks he was expected to perform on the farm. As such, Joaquín often talked about how his situation was very different from the situation of most SAWP workers. He often referenced the abuse of SAWP workers as something that he has heard of, but not something that he has experienced personally. For example, he claimed not to have ever experienced workplace harassment or other forms of discrimination at work. When he reflected on the most important problems facing workers in Canada's SAWP, Joaquín discussed the pressure to work fast as the foremost issue, but also claimed that he does not experience inordinate amounts of pressure in his own workplace.

Joaquín discussed a number of different workplace responsibilities that required independent decision-making and direct communication with his employer. Over his eleven years on the farm Joaquín has experienced a level of upward mobility within his workplace that is normally unfamiliar to his SAWP counterparts. For example, he has been provided with a private room in the bunkhouse, has been trusted with the supervision of two other SAWP workers and has even been provided with a company cell phone. Perhaps most importantly, Joaquín has been tasked with all greenhouse quality control and irrigation as well as with being in charge of pesticide mixing and application. He does not receive daily instructions, and is expected to go about his work on his own throughout the day. I conducted a number of site visits with Joaquín during my fieldwork, most often on Sunday afternoons when the greenhouse operation was down. Joaquín accompanied me on a number of tours of the greenhouse during these visits. I was particularly struck by his comfort with showing an outsider around his worksite. During these visits, his relaxed body language exposed the ease with which he was accustomed to moving about the worksite without the supervision of his employer or supervisors. Joaquín is also a particular outlier among his peers with regards to his wage earning experiences. Of the workers interviewed, Joaquín is the only worker that has overtly asked his employer for a raise, and as a result, he is the only worker to have been offered one. During his eleven years in the program,

Joaquín has shown an interest in learning English and discusses how he has learned from audio recordings borrowed from the local library and from internet videos that he watches in his downtime. He claims that being able to communicate with his employer in English has provided him with a lot of advantages over his co-workers. In particular, Joaquín has used his English language skills to negotiate a relatively better position for himself in his workplace, all within the constraints of the SAWP.

Joaquín's position in the workplace has sometimes resulted in tensions between him and his co-workers. During the time that I was conducting my field work, one worker in particular found Joaquín's workplace situation to be unacceptable and this worker presented a negative report to the Mexican Ministry of Labour about Joaquín's conduct on the farm. According to the Ministry's characterization of this worker's report as recounted to me by Joaquín, Joaquín was described a vengeful, aggressive and violent person that put the safety of his co-workers at risk. From Joaquín's perspective, he was being punished by his co-worker for having gained a modicum of power and responsibility in the workplace. As a consequence of this report, Ministry officials threatened Joaquín with one year's suspension from the SAWP. There was no opportunity for appeal and no formal investigation was made. However, Joaquín immediately contacted his employer in Canada, who advocated on his behalf directly to Ministry officials in Mexico. This resulted in Joaquín's return to his employer's farm and in having his name cleared at the Ministry, not to mention the employer's firing of the co-worker who filed the original Ministry complaint against Joaquín.

Joaquín participated in an interview and attended every collective creation workshop and participated in the final performance. I conducted several visits to his bunkhouse.

### **Chapter 6: ‘La Vida de Correr’: ‘Slave Work’ and Bunkhouse Relations**

In this chapter I engage with my research participants’ own words (from both interviews and workshops) as a way of exploring the ways in which power, control and surveillance are experienced on the ground for workers themselves. As such, my intention in this chapter is to bring to life some of the theoretical and contextual representations I advanced earlier. In examining workers’ portrayals of daily life in the bunkhouse and the workplace, it becomes clear that SAWP workers’ subjective experiences of confinement and discipline emerge as dominant themes. As such, in this chapter I aim to show how colonial relations, defined primarily by the hidden and privatized practices of organizing race and gender that are systemic to the SAWP, are produced and reproduced through social relations as they emerge in the intimate spaces that workers inhabit. As a way of demonstrating the precise ways that these colonial relations occur on the ground, I asked research participants to discuss their experiences navigating the complex environment of the SAWP living-at-work arrangement. Described by one participant as “la vida de correr [the life of running]” (Lauro), these workers’ stories primarily focused on their experiences of despotic labour practices and the resulting social and psychological stress these can produce. In the pages that follow, I attempt to tell a story that captures how structural vulnerabilities such as the ambient threat of deportation and the spatial collapse of the public and private through the mechanism of the living-at-work arrangement infuse all forms of social interaction and social reproduction that workers undertake resulting in exceptionally strained workplace relations among co-workers. It is worth mentioning that throughout my data chapters I discuss the complexities and contradictions that life in the SAWP invokes. Generally speaking, participants talked about daily life in such a way that could be described as full of routinized social interactions in the workplace and in the bunkhouse – ways of being that for most workers came to be considered normal given the context. That notwithstanding, I found that the act of telling their stories and being asked to contemplate their experiences provoked some profound reflections on their daily lives from many research participants. This provided a unique opportunity for me to gather rich and varied data on otherwise tacit experiences.

I have divided the chapter into two main sections. In the first section I examine workers’ own descriptions of confinement, control, surveillance and discipline, and gather these under the all-encompassing banner of what one worker referred to as ‘slave work’ (John). This section focuses on participants’ narratives of how their work is organized. Specifically, in the first half of this

chapter I offer an analysis of how confinement, difficult workplace conditions, a precarious immigration status, and the pressure to work fast contribute to a general sense of exploitation and anxiety among workers. This section provides a backdrop for my second section, which is an examination of how these elements impact worker relations as they develop in the workplace and the bunkhouse. In this final section I examine both one-on-one interviews and discussions that grew out of my collective creation workshops. I argue that the SAWP living-at-work arrangement facilitates an intensely competitive workplace environment that frustrates workers' potential for responding collectively to problems at work. Instead, the SAWP workplace engenders a profound sense of isolation and individualism among workers, both because of and in spite of their uninterrupted close proximity to one another.

Through an examination of interviews and collective creation workshops, major themes related to the idea of 'slave work' will be examined in this section. These themes include: workers' sense of confinement that the living-at-work arrangement generates, the role of substandard workplace conditions in producing a compliant workforce, the stress produced by the constant threat of deportation, and the physical and mental strain associated with the pressure to be productive and to work fast. Though other participants may not have discussed overt connections between the administration of the guest worker program and managerial practices that are reminiscent of slavery or indentured servitude, workers did report similar experiences to those shared with me by John. Indeed, it can be inferred through the interviews and collective creation workshops that workers' experiences of migration, work and employment in the context of the SAWP take place in an environment that is remarkably similar for most if not all workers, regardless of workplace. This is an environment which I have argued in Chapter 2 reproduces colonial relations in daily life, and as such is one which is imbued with ambient racism, sexism and exceptional forms of abandonment and confinement of foreign 'others'.

### **'Slave Work'**

Despite the overview I provided in Chapter 2 that highlighted the ways in which the use of Canada's temporary foreign worker program is historically embedded in a national history of indentured servitude and slavery, very few research participants made any overt references to these antecedent forms of labour processes. That notwithstanding, John<sup>xxvi</sup>, a 48-year old SAWP worker from Trinidad and Tobago who was in his 13<sup>th</sup> season at the time of our interview, was

overtly blunt and clear on relating the SAWP to slavery. Unlike most of my research participants, John had developed relationships with migrant worker advocates connected to the group Justicia for Migrant Workers, and it was clear during our interview that these relationships shaped his understanding of the SAWP experience. Specifically, John referred to himself and his co-workers as ‘slaves’ or to his employers as ‘slave masters’ a total of eight times throughout our two-and-a-half-hour interview. I do not feel that for John these were hyperbolic accounts of his experiences of employment in Canada. On the contrary, for John, ‘slavery’ was an apt description of some of his experiences as a worker in the SAWP, particularly his work on one tobacco farm. His references to slavery were made in the context of stories from the farm that illustrated his and his co-workers’ employment relationships as particularly exploitative. For example, in one instance, John discussed how his employer tried to force John and his co-workers to pick tobacco during a lightning storm. John questioned the fairness of the employer’s decision to send them to the fields and made the claim that the employer would not send his workers out to work in the field during a lightning storm if his workers were white Canadians. In his own words, John felt as though he was being sent to work in a dangerous working environment “because what, I’m Black?” Having just completed his contract on the tobacco farm at the time of our interview, he said bluntly: “I would never work in tobacco again... that’s really a kind of slave work.”

Throughout his interview John discussed aspects of the SAWP which are well reported in the literature as processes and practices which facilitate the discipline and control of workers, aspects such as a lack of formal citizenship rights, a lack of government support for workers on both sides of the border, and workers’ being tied to a single employer for the duration of their contracts. To add substance to my position on the living-at-work arrangement described above, it is clear in talking to workers like John that in daily life, these aspects of the SAWP are particularly exacerbated by and primarily experienced through the spatial collapse of workers’ public and private lives. This collapse occurs in the course of tethering workers to the worksite through the mechanism of the bunkhouse. As such, John, like many research participants, described a system through which SAWP employers’ often despotic forms of managerial control, embedded in a system of legislated abandonment and exclusion, may take place in the intimate and hidden locales of employers’ private domains, away from the realm of public scrutiny. From the point of view of policy-makers however, particularly oppressive workplace situations are

generally understood to be unfortunate anomalies in a program that is often considered to be a “best-practice model” of temporary foreign labour migration (Basok, 2007, "SAWP as a Model," para. 1). My participant descriptions of employment belie this perception. To illustrate: John referred to his most difficult experiences in the SAWP quite simply as ‘slave work’ – a phrase that John used to express his opinion on a number of different facets of his life in the program, including: the pace of work, bodily control, a sense of confinement and the resulting psychological stress and inter-personal conflict that these generated.

John talked at length throughout his interview about what he meant by this term. The elements that for John constituted ‘slave work’ could be boiled down to a) workplace conditions and b) the conflictual and competitive social relations that these conditions provoked. With regards to dismal workplace conditions, John discussed in emotional detail about how seemingly random and impossible to predict instructions from management would present continuous disruptions to workers’ daily lives, resulting in constant confusion and psychological pressure for individual workers. Throughout his interview John stressed the importance of workers’ being able to meticulously plan their everyday social reproductive tasks such as cooking and cleaning, and how being efficient at this was especially vital given workers’ close quarters and how little time they had outside of formal work. However, John described a situation in which it was impossible to know from one day to the next what the employer would demand, and as a result workers would not be able to pace themselves or organize their lives in a useful way, causing stress and producing conflict. I had the impression that John felt this was intentional on the part of his employer. In his words:

Cutting tobacco is a back pain because some farmers don't want you to get up and stretch. Dey don't want dat. Dey want to see your head down and you just going PA, PA, PA, PA (cutting the air with his hands with staccato motions). In the end are the Dodge Van or the Chevy, hop on the back... Got farmers will take ya... "Ok, hop on guys, ok you start this one, you start this one..." And we just come out like "Ok, we'll cut six rows today, you'll do twelve." How much guys he have? He'll never say "ok tomorrow you guys prepare... I wanna cut 36" He will just come in the morning, them men running and cutting tired, he say "guys,

ummm we'll do 12 more more. We'll do 36 today.” Then everybody be like "Pst... 36? Why dat man got to tell me dat buoy?"

John went on to describe how the unpredictability and chaos of the everyday workday took their toll on him and his fellow workers. In particular John was very animated in his description of how his work life affected life in the bunkhouse. In order to express the intense pace of life for workers in the evenings, during the times that should otherwise be reserved for relaxing and taking care of personal needs, he increased the speed of his speech and animated his story with rapid hand gestures and staccato sound effects. The environment he described was of hungry and fatigued workers desperate to eat and desperate to rest, but inescapably fighting each other in the miniscule spaces of the kitchen and the washroom. He said:

When I go home, I got to rush to cook, gotta rush to bathe, because you won't get hot water. You have nine guys and you just have two baths. Some guys wanna wash soiled clothes. When they put the new machine the house... no hot water. So some guys come home, rush in the kitchen, PA NA NA NA, you hear pots tumble down.... In tobacco some guys will sit down and say ‘I will cook tonight.’... and they watch the clock, 11/10 o'clock, them guys not gonna cook. They get up at 5 in the morning and start to prepare self for 6 in the morning or 7, so if him no have strong will power he tell the boss half way through work "I fell apart I wanna go home.”

The primary elements that John described as contributing to ‘slave work’ are not unique to his experience, but in fact are consistent themes that run throughout my data. Ian, for example, a 44-year-old SAWP worker from Mexico who was in his 17<sup>th</sup> season at the time of our interview described how in one workplace his experience was defined by managerial practices he speculated were grounded in racial prejudice. He described how the employers’ overt racism towards their workers facilitated the expectation that Mexican workers could and should work at a pace that Iván described as inhuman. He said:

On one farm, it was maximum exploitation. They treated us like dogs. They wanted us to work so fast, like we were machines. It was very difficult. Actually,

it was some bad luck on my part, because for seven years I was passed from farm to farm and couldn't find a good employer, because they always treated us differently. Like there was always a bit of racism towards us [Mexicans]. They didn't treat us like human beings, but like animals. They wanted us to work at the pace of a machine, and that was just not possible.

Other workers, such as Lucas focused on the way in which workers' bodies are tethered directly to the work itself, a sentiment which aligns with the impressions of the program described here by John and Ian. In his words: "Many workers have a lot of fear. Sometimes one has the impression that you are working in a system under which one is directly enslaved to the work."

### **Bound to the Bunkhouse: Workers' Descriptions of Confinement Tethered to the Workplace**

Like Ignacio illustrated so succinctly in his statement, "somos sujetos [we are subjects]", highlighted above, many workers discussed their sense of captivity as SAWP workers legislated to reside in on-site dormitories provided by their employers. For example, Lucas, a 40-year-old Guatemalan worker at the end of his first 2-year contract, provided an in-depth description of his living conditions, and how these contributed to a sense of incarceration. A greenhouse worker in Leamington, Lucas talked about how his dormitory was connected to the packing area attached to the greenhouse. He described his bunkhouse as having two floors: the ground floor where the kitchen and the showers were located and the second floor where the bunks were located. In Lucas' bunkhouse there was no communal area for eating or socializing. The kitchen and bathroom area were located in the warehouse/packing area, and Lucas described how workers were forced to enter and exit the shower in the presence of other workers who were still working. He described how workers wrapped only in towels had to dodge moving forklifts as they lifted and carried heavy pallets full of produce. As the bunkhouse was directly connected to the workplace, the layout ensured that workers did not even need to step outside in order to start work in the morning or return to their bunks in the evenings. On this point, other research participants reported how their employers found ways of keeping workers immobile. Enrique's employer for example required that his workers sign a contract agreeing that they would not ride bicycles while in Canada for fear that the company would be deemed responsible for any cycling accidents that occurred during their workers' contracts. This same employer did not allow

visitors on company property, and Enrique, who was a key participant in the collective creation workshops, would have to sneak off the farm on Sunday afternoons in order to attend our weekly sessions.

The overarching themes in which these narratives are encompassed are of confinement and the sense that one is merely an economic body. In other words, workers are here to work, and are here to *be at work*, and as such are to *remain at work*. Unlike Canadian workers who may have family responsibilities or other social obligations in addition to their working lives, there is an expectation that all aspects of an SAWP worker's identity other than that of 'worker' must be suspended while in Canada (Basok, 2002). To illustrate, in private conversations, Mexican participants would very often refer to themselves as donkeys ["soy burro"], the quintessential working animal. Lucas expressed the connection between captivity and work most succinctly when he said:

It's a very difficult problem, because we can't just leave work, go home, cook dinner, rest and forget about work for a while. Here under this system I am always at work, even if I am not working, I am always at work.

Lauro, a 27-year-old Guatemalan worker in his first year of a two-year contract talked about how always being at work, even when technically he is not working, benefits the employer as the company has permanent access to workers. He said:

If we are in the bunkhouse, we have to stay there because whenever we are at home resting, the boss could call us and say, "listen, I need you to come now, it's an emergency", and if we are not in the house, there will be problems, and we don't ever say to him that he doesn't control us.

Lauro described a workday that essentially never ends, as he and his co-workers are always available to go to work. These participant descriptions are consistent with research into the living-at-work arrangement both in Canada and elsewhere that examines how having workers isolated from their families in employer provided housing facilitates the stretching of the workday, often to extremes. In other words, participants described an employment arrangement that was able to exert an exorbitant amount of control and discipline over the working and non-

working lives of workers by physically tethering workers to the worksite at all times (Basok, 2002; Pun, 2007). To illustrate, I have included a photograph of a bunkhouse of two of my participants who were co-workers at the time of my research (Mauricio and Javier) (Figure 1). This photograph very much represents what a typical bunkhouse in the town of Leamington looks like from the exterior (Figure 1). This photograph shows how from the outside the bunkhouse is indistinguishable from the greenhouse, and thus reinforces the idea that in the context of the SAWP, the home and the workplace simply cannot be separated.

**Figure 1: A typical Leamington bunkhouse.** The door to the immediate left of the garage door is the door that workers use to leave and enter the dormitory.



### **Bunkhouse conditions**

Dormitory conditions exacerbate the problem of living at work. For example, Lucas provided a detailed account of his bunkhouse. In his bunkhouse, the sleeping area was composed of plywood bunk beds, and he described holes in the ceiling that were covered with plastic, resulting in dirt often falling onto his bed. He talked about how cooking in the kitchen was difficult, as there were only five stoves for 70 workers, and they were often out of service due to overuse. He discussed how the employers did not encourage workers to report problems, and so broken appliances would often stay broken for long periods of time. Other participants reported similar situations. For example, Horario, a 32-year-old SAWP worker from Mexico who had been coming to Canada to work for the past 7 years, reported sharing six showers among 66

workers, and a small and crowded dormitory with 10 co-workers. To illustrate, Horario allowed me to take and use photographs of his dormitory (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Horario's dormitory**



The photograph illustrates the cramped and overcrowded bunkhouse conditions that many of my participants discussed. Like many workers, Horario's dormitory is comprised of several clusters of metal-framed bunk beds with little to no private space for storing clothing, passports, and other personal effects. This photograph reveals how workers string sheets and towels over their beds in order to create small pockets of privacy. The photograph also shows personal items, including toiletries and food crammed into workers' tight personal areas. Another participant, Lauro, talked about how there were 20 workers living in a bunkhouse designed for 10. He said that at least half of his co-workers did not have a space to even unpack their bags, and so lived out of their suitcases for the duration of their contracts. In addition to cramped dormitories and substandard utilities, participants discussed fears related to health and safety issues that could arise due to living in quarters that are connected to agricultural work environments. For example: two research participants, both SAWP workers from Mexico who worked together in the same greenhouse, Mauricio (age 26, one season) and Javier (age 45, 11 seasons), reported how their bunkhouse was located directly above the farm's fertilizer storage room. Ernesto, an older SAWP worker from Mexico who participated in the post-performance focus group described the situation best when he explained his dismal bunkhouse conditions in this way:

There is not enough space for each person. Take me for example, I have all of my clothes, my street clothes and my work clothes piled up in a corner. Why?

Because the dormitory is too small. There is not enough space, and we have to live like this. It's unfortunate, but we cannot choose. We have no power to choose where we live. We don't ask for much: simply to live like normal human beings. Not living on top of each other like animals. Because that's what the bosses say, that we come here to work like animals. So they keep us in a corral, like animals. For us it's uncomfortable, but for the boss no. It's better for him that we are close together.

It must nevertheless be stated that not all workers considered their workplace or their dormitory to be inadequate or uncomfortable. However, even those workers with relatively decent living conditions often reported feeling trapped at work with little to no space where they could seek out a bit of privacy. Ignacio, for example, described his physical dormitory itself as “nice... not too small. It's a good space. There are no problems with this.” But, Ignacio complained that he had no place to himself as he shared his room with eight other workers. Joaquín also described a comfortable dormitory situation, and unlike any other participant in this study, he had his own private room with his own television. Of all the workers I spoke to, he was by far the most comfortable. That notwithstanding, Joaquín used the word “amarrado” to describe his feelings about the bunkhouse. This is most closely translated as ‘tied’, as in ‘the dog was tied to a post’. Joaquín therefore felt that living in the bunkhouse, no matter how comfortable his living situation, drastically limited his freedom. Also unlike most SAWP workers, Joaquín was married at the time of my fieldwork and was in Canada with his wife. His wife, Lourdes, who was also a participant in this research, was an SAWP worker contracted to a nearby greenhouse. This was a highly unusual situation, as SAWP workers are not allowed to bring their families to Canada, yet Joaquín and Lourdes managed to defy the rules in their favour. Regardless of Joaquín's relative comfort in the dormitory, informal rules around worker relations in the bunkhouse meant that he and Lourdes were limited to short visits over coffee on Friday afternoons when their employers took them to town to buy groceries for the week.

### **Bunkhouse rules and the regulation of sexuality**

Participants discussed how rules are employed to regulate bunkhouse relations. I argue that bunkhouse rules play an important role in producing a productive workforce and in establishing the norm of employer control and surveillance as the accepted backdrop on which daily life for

workers takes place. In this sense, an examination of bunkhouse rules reveals that the invasive regulation of social experience such as mobility and sexuality is a deeply sensual and indeed normalized aspect of workers everyday lives. In other words, workers' narratives reveal how bunkhouse rules play an important role in how workers' behaviours are policed and indeed how workers police their own behaviour at work and in the bunkhouse. 'Rules' here refer to a formal or sometimes informal set of standards that regulate life in the bunkhouse. Employers most often set these rules. In some cases workers have reported that these rules are printed out and displayed in common bunkhouse areas, such as the kitchen. Other participants have reported that these rules are mostly just communicated verbally, either directly from the employer or the foreman, or through word of mouth among workers. It can be inferred from my participants' narratives that these rules are strikingly similar from worksite to worksite, though may be more or less strictly enforced, depending on the farm. The most common rules have to do with regulating sexual relations between workers, evening curfews, general housekeeping, and noise.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of bunkhouse rules is how they serve to regulate workers' sexualities. For both men and women, sexual relations are forbidden in the bunkhouse. On the one hand this ensures that workers stay focused on their work (Basok, 2002), but it also serves to enshrine masculinity as the determining gender to which all workers, men and women, are interpellated in the workplace. As I shall elucidate in more detail below, eradicating the potential for sexual expression in the context of the SAWP may indeed summon forth masculinity as the hegemonic workplace gender thus ensuring that conflict and competition, traits associated with masculinity, remain the signature organizing features of daily work. In one sense bunkhouse rules interpellate workers toward stereotypical gender norms – such as accommodating homemaker (feminine) by enforcing cleanliness, particularly in women's dormitories and antagonistic troublemaker (masculine), by regulating nightly curfews. On the other hand, the state regulated prohibition of workers traveling with their spouses together with employer regulated bunkhouse rules that prohibit sexual relations may be an attempt to essentially erase all forms of sexuality from the workplace. This attempt at desexualisation is an integral aspect of subject formation in both the workplace and the bunkhouse. As Salzinger (2003) examines in her ethnographic studies of Maquila factories in Northern Mexico – the regulation of sexuality in such a way that attempts to remove it from the shop floor creates a gender vacuum that needs to be filled. She argues that in these workplace environments masculinity becomes the gender that

fills this void. ‘Desexualized’ workers can thus be interpellated toward a productive (male) worker, regardless of whether they are men or women. This creates a paradox that I witnessed throughout my data, namely that workers, and women workers in particular spoke of the need to keep the bunkhouse clean and orderly, but at the same time were expected to thrive in a workplace environment defined by conflict and competition.

In the only women’s dormitory to which I had access during my fieldwork, company rules were printed and placed in the bunkhouse for all to see. Research participants recounted these rules to me as follows:

- No men allowed;
- No visits allowed inside the bunkhouse;
- No washing shoes in the washing machine;
- Lights off at 10 pm;
- Cell phones off at 10 pm in the dormitory;
- Don’t make noise with your shoes;
- Respect others’ things;
- Don’t sit on the washing machines;
- Don’t sit on the telephone tables;
- Lights on at 10 am on Sundays;
- One group cleaning every week.

Four women (SAWP, Mexico) from this bunkhouse joined my collective creation workshops near the beginning of the creation process. In one activity I facilitated during this session, I asked the four women to sculpt a static ‘image’ of their daily lives using their own and their co-workers’ bodies, as per the process of Image Theatre (Boal, 2002, pp. 174-216). The women, Lourdes, Consuela (age 60, 18 seasons), Ines (age 40, 11 seasons), and Natalia (age 45, 11 seasons) created an image that represented a typical evening in the bunkhouse after work. But instead of representing an evening relaxing after a long day in the greenhouse, this image revealed the hectic atmosphere typical of bunkhouse living. One character was doing laundry, one character was sweeping the kitchen floor, one character was preparing dinner, and there was one character enjoying a coffee at the kitchen table, waiting for the laundry machines to become available.

None of the characters were socializing with each other, as each was intensely focused on her individual task. In the discussion that followed the activity, the women described a large and densely populated bunkhouse occupied by 50 women: 25 from Mexico and 25 from Jamaica. They explained how the image they created revealed how bunkhouse maintenance occupied much of their free time. This maintenance work was required by the company and was not paid. They explained how they lived in a large bunkhouse that took a long time to clean, and that the company sent a representative to inspect their cleaning work once a week, on Mondays. They explained how this meant that their one half-day off a week (Sunday afternoons) was spent preparing for the company's weekly inspection. Male workers were also expected to keep their dormitories orderly, and were expected to do one major cleaning once a week – normally on Saturdays. However, the intense regulation of cleanliness and order that the women participants described seemed to be more commonly relegated to women's bunkhouses. This gender disparity affected how much free time women workers reported having in comparison to their male counterparts – regardless of how many hours they worked. In other words, male participants reported having more free time on the weekends – time that they could spend learning English or playing soccer, for example. Women workers on the other hand were expected to partake in the second job of maintaining the dormitory – an unpaid and thankless job that was nonetheless required from the company. These four women participants only attended one collective creation workshop, stating that they were too busy with bunkhouse cleaning on their day off to attend more sessions.

Lourdes explained how this system was organized thusly:

The company has a representative that comes to inspect on Mondays, that the house is clean. The company prepares the list of groups to do the cleaning. So they come and each person signs the list, and those who do the cleaning have their names on the list. Then the company comes to inspect, and they say, “well, this is good... this is dirty”, like that. And they bring a paper to select the next group. That way they know everything that is happening in the house, so they can regulate.

For the most part, these workers reported feeling as though the enforcement of bunkhouse rules, such as those that regulate cleaning, by the company was a more or less efficient way of

maintaining order in a living situation that they felt could easily descend into chaos. All of these workers had been participating in the program for several seasons, and had become used to organizing their living situation in this way, to the point where they were themselves enforcing bunkhouse rules and even creating their own. The latter they referred to as “internal rules” (Lourdes) and were rules that they themselves felt were needed in addition to those created by the company. These ‘internal’ rules typically regulated the most intimate activities of daily life. They provided the example of being required to fold the clothes of the person who used the dryer before you. They shared these internal rules with the company representative, who then took on the responsibility of enforcing them through a system based on worker complaints. In the words of Lourdes, asking the company to enforce bunkhouse rules meant the company could help “us to live together well... they know that if we don’t obey the rule to fold the clothes, this will cause problems.” Participants claimed to have ‘reported’ their co-workers to the company representative for digressions such as cleaning their tennis shoes in the washing machine and not folding the previous washer’s clothing. Given the company’s strict regulation of bunkhouse rules related to cleanliness in the women’s dormitory it could be argued that women workers are interpellated toward a (feminine) homemaking subject in the bunkhouse and a (masculine) competitive and productive subject in the workplace, as I shall examine in more detail below. However, in light of the desexualisation of the SAWP environment through employers’ equally strict regulation of sexual relations, it is perhaps more likely that women workers’ were attempting to manage the bunkhouse in their own way, through the creation of internal rules for example. Like the women Maquila workers described by Salzinger (2003) who would change out of the gender neutral uniforms of the factory at the end of the day and into their high heels and skirts, these women SAWP workers were finding their own way to feminize an otherwise hyper-masculine environment. Regardless of their efficacy, internal rules were intended to maintain pleasant relationships and to limit confrontation, and in this sense were meant as an antidote to the intense competition and pressure women workers experienced in the workplace. Participants’ narratives reveal a variety of rules that companies required workers to follow and how these were surprisingly similar across a wide range of workplaces. For example: “always keep the bunkhouse clean, take care of the furniture and make sure everything is in order. The foreman also ordered ‘no señoritas!’ (Hernan).” On this final point, Hernan reported that his

employer was particularly strict. Many other workers described similar situations. Lauro, for example said:

In the case of rules, the boss told us: ‘when you are in the house, you can’t invite in anyone who is not from the house. Only you guys. You can’t invite strangers into the house. So I don’t want you bringing women into the house.’ That’s what he said.

Workers’ descriptions of bunkhouse rules reveal employers’ practices of surveillance and control in the realm of the intimate. The SAWP living-at-work arrangement relegates workers’ intimate lives to the sphere of employers’ private properties, providing employers with an inordinate amount of control over what kinds of relationships are allowed to develop in these spaces. The living-at-work arrangement facilitates managerial practices, such as formal workplace regulations that serve to control workers’ sexual practices that would be impossible to regulate in almost any other workplace arrangement. Signs such as the one located of Ignacio’s bunkhouse which states that “BUNKHOUSE IS FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY. ALL OTHERS WILL BE CHARGED WITH TRESPASSING” may seem innocuous to passers-by, but hidden behind that sign are practices of subject formation that are grounded in colonial relations. Those consigned to living in the bunkhouse are relegated to the racialized and gendered subject position of ‘migrant worker’, a subject that is spatially and economically tethered to the employer, the latter’s own subjectivity as exalted citizen is all the while reinforced. Perhaps of all the rules, the evening curfew is one that uniquely contributes to the daily experience of confinement and control. Emiliano, a 43-year-old SAWP worker from Mexico in his 17<sup>th</sup> season described the evening curfew thusly: “we have to be in bed by 10 at night at the latest. You can’t talk and you have to stay there in silence” (Emiliano). And Ignacio: “at 10 pm everything is shut down.” While a curfew was often described by participants as a rule that could help to regulate workers’ sleep, as noise could be kept to a minimum during the night, I argue that instilling a rule whereby workers’ bodies must quietly revert to their employer-provided living quarters by nightfall is particularly emblematic of the way that race is produced and labour is regulated in Canada’s agricultural industry<sup>xxvii</sup>.

For many workers, bunkhouse rules were a completely normal, if not banal, way for employers to regulate workers' daily lives. As such, participants rarely gave bunkhouse rules a second thought. For example, when I asked Horario during his interview about bunkhouse rules, he simply could not think of any. Only once I started naming some rules that workers discussed in other interviews did he remember that rules such as not inviting members of the opposite sex into the bunkhouse and a strict 10 pm curfew were in place in his dormitory. For Horario, these were so normal and embodied as a matter of daily practice as not to be considered rules at all. As such, it is important to stress that in most cases I needed to probe fairly deeply in order to elicit worker responses regarding bunkhouse regulations such as the ones I discuss in this section. This was not because workers felt ashamed or embarrassed, or that for whatever other reason they did not want to discuss this aspect of their lives. On the contrary, these rules were so ubiquitous as to just fade into the background of workers' lives. For the most part, when in the interviews workers did finally bring these rules to the top of their minds, they were considered to be entirely within reason, almost to the point that they were somewhat surprised that I would even be interested in hearing about them. This is in keeping with Rancière's position that inequality is accepted not out of ignorance, but out of belief, examined above in Chapter 3. For these research participants, the sensual and indeed collective and protracted experience of having their freedoms restricted is enough to explain and indeed even justify the ongoing restriction of these very same freedoms. Ignacio, for example discussed how workers' 'guest worker' status was justification enough for the creation and enforcement of rules such as curfews and the abolition of sex. While not occurring specifically at the moment of production per se, the regulation of sexuality and mobility are clearly key elements employed in controlling the SAWP workforce and maximizing industrial production. Intense competition in the workplace and the restriction of freedoms in the bunkhouse produce a contradictory migrant worker subject which is both masculinized on the one hand and desexualized on the other – a role that workers come to experience and largely accept through the regulation of both the labour process and the intimate relations that develop between workers in private living quarters.

### **'Deportability' and the pressure to produce**

While only one of my research participants actually experienced repatriation first hand (Iván), all reported that the threat of deportation was a key feature of their experiences as SAWP workers. Given their precarious citizenship status as discussed in Chapter 2 above, this is simply the

material reality for SAWP workers. Montenegro, a 28-year-old Guatemalan worker completing the second year of his contract at the time of our interview underscored the significance of the threat of deportation to workplace discipline. He recounted how his foreman in the greenhouse, a native Spanish speaker, would tell the workers: “do your job well or I’ll send you assholes back to Guatemala [bien hecho el trabajo porque si no los mando para Guatemala güey].” Montenegro also discussed interactions that he had with his employer regarding a workplace accident that had involved one of his co-workers. He described an instance during which he and his co-worker were assigned with replacing the cloth on a machine that pulls canvas throughout the greenhouse, when his Mexican co-worker got his hand caught in the machine. Montenegro described how the following day his employer required him to sign a form in English about the accident for the Ontario Ministry of Labour, and instructed him on what to say to Health and Safety inspectors, should they ask to speak with him. Montenegro described this situation thusly:

The next day the employer came to find me and told me, ‘if they ask you if this machine is like this, then you need to say yes’. I told him that I can’t tell a lie. I have to tell the truth because they will come to inspect what really happened. He told me, ‘if they ask you if we gave you classes or training on how to use that machine you have to say yes, because if you don’t you are going back to Guatemala and you won’t work here anymore, because it will be a big fine for the company’.

Participants discussed the threat of deportation not only in the context of disciplining workers in the workplace, but also in the bunkhouse. Benjamin, an SAWP worker from Mexico (age 49, 13 seasons) for example, told me how his boss threatened to repatriate workers for breaking bunkhouse rules, such as for having intimate sexual relations. For newer workers especially, the threat of deportation was a salient element throughout participant narratives, suggesting that the constant threat of repatriation is a stronger force for worker control among younger and less experienced SAWP workers. During the collective creation workshops for example, Mauricio, in his first year in the program, discussed how the threat of deportation was more intimidating for newer workers, as they felt they were more dispensable than older workers with more experience. While many older participants knew of workers who had not had their contracts renewed as a result of problems in the workplace, very few had witnessed the more extreme act

of repatriation. Older more experienced workers therefore perceived this employer tactic as simply a threat, though one that tended to yield results that favoured employers' needs. As shall be discussed in more detail below, this divergence in experiences between older and younger workers is a defining element in the development of challenging and even hostile relationships that develop between co-workers.

As a relatively new recruit to Canada's temporary foreign worker program, Montenegro discussed the threat of deportation as a particularly significant element of his experience in Canada. He said:

I know that for many of my co-workers, things happen. A lot of problems occur at work, for example accidents. But realistically, the foreman has everyone under pressure. All of us Latinos are scared to denunciate him. We have a lot of fear because we all want to work here, and they know that we have a lot of need to work here. They know that very well. So when they threaten us and they say 'you're going back to your country', one says to oneself, 'oh, well, I'm not going to say anything'.

Most participants made the direct connection between workers 'deportability' (Basok, Bélanger, & Rivas, 2013) and employers' desire to put pressure on workers in order to maintain high levels of productivity. For younger workers new to the program especially, the ambient threat of deportation was expressed as an important feature of daily experience. However, the longer a worker was in the program, the more the fear or even the possibility of being sent home began to fade. On the one hand, this may be related to how more experienced workers expect to be rehired by their employers from year to year. This expectation is indeed borne out by high levels of return year to year, as discussed in Chapter 2. On the other hand, as in the discussion of rules in the previous section, over time not having the right to stay or change employers became normalized. Inevitably, workers learn to accept the structural limitations of the program, and as a result a culture of accommodation among older more experienced workers tends to replace the sense of fear and anxiety that mark younger workers. As I shall review in more detail below, the production of habitus does not go unchallenged, but instead engenders an environment of

competition and conflict that further entrenches the production of a masculinized hyper-productive worker subject.

It is clear therefore that one goal of producing a migrant worker subject confined to the bunkhouse and working under the constant threat of deportation is to create and maintain a highly productive and reliable workforce in Canada's agricultural industry. When asked to choose the most difficult problem they faced at work, the majority of participants discussed the pressure to work fast in an environment where intense competition between workers is the norm. Indeed, issues related to bunkhouse/workplace relations and confinement converge in the moment of production – meaning that for many workers the biggest complaint was the work process itself. For example, Lourdes, a 40-year-old SAWP worker from Mexico in her 11<sup>th</sup> season and Emmanuel, a 26-year-old Guatemalan worker in his second year of a two-year contract described how pressure in their workplaces was related to the employers' methods of controlling the labour process, and discussed how at the time of the interview their respective companies were switching from hourly wages to piece work. They each stressed the importance of their company's decision to publicly post a daily list displaying the breakdown of the amount of produce, calculated by weight that each individual worker was able to pick. Both Lourdes and Emmanuel felt that their employer displayed this list as a way to engender anxiety and competition among workers. For her part, Lourdes commented on how this managerial practice prompted a group of her co-workers to complain to each other that the employer was “turning us into slaves [nos están esclavizando].” She explained the psychological pressure that workers face under these conditions. She said:

Now that we are working so hard with so much pressure... sometimes you get tired, no? Sometimes you pause for a second to rest your arm and immediately your subconscious tells you, ‘you can't rest.’ And your response is that you're done for good, but it's not true. You simply need to rest your arm. And that is how it starts. You can't rest. You just can't rest.

In this quote, Lourdes was reflecting on how the pressure to produce invokes a process of self-control and self-surveillance. Needing to rest, but essentially having a voice inside your head telling yourself that you have to keep going is, in her words “how it all starts” (Lourdes). I

understand the ‘it’ that Lourdes was referring to here as a largely unspoken yet powerful culture of worker acceptance, a culture that begins at the individual moment of production. This is a culture that as I shall discuss in more detail below generates complex and contradictory worker subjectivities that can be both critical and accommodating of SAWP workplace practices.

As the most senior worker among her female co-workers, Lourdes discussed how she had a conversation with the foreman about switching from waged work to piece work. She recounted how he told her the objective was to get workers to work at a 20 per-cent higher capacity than was possible through the use of waged work. Lourdes described how the company introduced a limit of tomatoes picked beyond which a worker is paid according to the weight they picked, as opposed to their hours worked. If a worker comes in at under this limit, they are paid hourly and thus could possibly make lower wages than their co-workers. She described the intense pressure that this produced among her and her co-workers, stating that in a piece-work environment “I get tired in one month as much as I would in eight before.” She continued:

For the ladies who don’t pass the limit set by the company for them to make piece rates, that is the gain of the company, right? The women put in a lot of effort, like I do, right up until the end, run... run... run, for nothing. Those ladies are really deceived by the list because they say, ‘I didn’t appear on the list again, but this week I felt like I was running toward my death’. Yes, it’s true, and like this we feel, like ‘I didn’t reach the weight, my god, what am I going to do now?’ So we think, ‘you know what, I’ll bring a sandwich to work and I’ll eat it at 12, and at 12:10 I’ll start to pick to see if I can get more tomatoes so that they can pay me for them.’ That’s not normal. That’s a sacrifice that we are giving to the company.

While in her interview she opined on how these practices were “not normal”, she was at the same time clearly describing a process through which workers come to develop embodied practices of workplace accommodation. Hernan shared a similar description of his workplace. He said:

They give us a certain quantity that we have to pick and when he [the foreman] comes to check, he says it’s not enough, that we have to do more and if we don’t

we are going back to Guatemala. Under such pressure we give more than we have to give.

Other workers described similar situations with regards to the intensity with which they were expected to work, what Lauro referred to as “a life of running [la vida de correr]” and Ignacio referred to as “tremendous pressure, beyond what would be considered normal.” In the words of Ernesto: “we do the work of five Canadian men, and the cost of labour is very cheap.”

Montenegro, whose employer also used piece work as a mechanism to control labour output, recounted a situation in which he felt the company used the promise of higher wages through piece work in order to exact more work from employees, even though this situation rarely benefitted workers. This is a classic way for employers to harness the energy of their workers in such a way that the employer provides the worker with the illusion of agency, in the sense that piecework may provide the space for “personal decisions... all framed as the possibility of control” (Salzinger, 2003, p. 112). This may be seen as an attempt by the employer to manipulate workers through the structure of production, thus intensifying competition between workers. In the words of Montenegro:

The foreman comes and says, ‘you guys are making 14 or 15 an hour, the faster you go, the more money you get’. And then when the pay stub arrives at the end of the week, and you do your calculations, you are still getting 10.25 minus deductions. And they are pressuring you and they say it is for piece work, like they call it here. And that is not the way they are paying.

What these workers are describing could aptly be described as what Lourdes referred to above as a “sacrifice to the company.” This sacrifice primarily involves an intense increase in productivity in spite of there being very little incentive to do so besides the threat of repatriation or of not being asked back to the farm the following year. That workers were sacrificing too much energy for their employers was a common theme among research participants. For example, one significant interaction occurred when I and a group of four workers (Ignacio, Mauricio, Joachin and Javier) we were developing a scene during the collective creation workshops that was meant to depict pressure in the workplace. After an afternoon of reflecting on this issue among his

group of peers, Javier discussed how he had begun to realize how in his workplace there had been a steady increase in the pressure to work faster in the past few years. The group discussed how this resulted in a climate of competition that may only serve to benefit his employer, as an increase in pressure to produce meant that his employer could increase production without increasing the costs of labour. After some reflection, Javier pointed out that when he started in the program 11 years prior to our interview it took 15 workers to match the output of 11 workers at the time of my fieldwork, and he claimed that his employer was planning on only hiring 10 the following year. Many workers discussed how intensely stifling greenhouse environments that would often reach 40 degrees Celsius or above would often aggravate this situation thus increasing the intensity of workers' physical and mental stress. For example, Montenegro talked about how the pressure to work fast would result in workers regularly working until they vomited from exhaustion. As an example of this, during July and August, the hottest months of Canada's agricultural season, my collective creation workshop participants would often arrive to our sessions extremely fatigued after a long and hot week in the greenhouse, and would often fall asleep during our sessions and would have to wake each other up.

Examples from workers such as Lourdes and Emmanuel reveal how managerial processes that focus on an increase in worker productivity bolstered a competitive environment in which workers work against each other in individual efforts to increase their own efficiency. This is an element that runs throughout my data. Many participants described their daily lives in terms of intense competition grounded in a fear of losing their jobs. This is a climate I describe as a constant race to maintain their positions in the workplace and by extension in the SAWP. In the words of Emmanuel:

There's a lot of competition. No one wants to come in last. Everyone wants to be first. We all want to reach the fastest workers because it's not good to be last. If I'm last then I have to increase by battery power to not be last. If I'm last then I won't be asked back another year.

Hernan, a 22-year-old Guatemalan worker in his first season described how his employers' used the threat of deportation to pit workers from different countries against each other for the purpose of making workers work harder and faster. He said:

We need to pick a specific amount of tomatoes every day, and if we don't the employer says he will send us back to Guatemala. That is how he pressures us. It is under this pressure that we have to give as much as we have. One worker who was not doing well in the job was sent to do other tasks, but when the first year of his contract was completed<sup>xxviii</sup>, he was sent back to Guatemala. He says that if we don't produce he'll bring in people from other countries. No more Guatemalans. As for me, I feel a lot of pressure at work.

Many workers provided vivid descriptions of how a climate of competition affected co-worker relations both at work and in the bunkhouse. Lourdes, for example provided exact details of how competition became a problem in her workplace. In her words:

In order to gain advantage over a worker who is picking more, one might say... well if the break is 10 minutes, then today I might take only five, and that way I gain the advantage of five minutes, which might represent one box. The next day, my co-worker might say, 'if she is only going to take 5 minutes, then tomorrow I'm not going to take any.' And that's how it starts. It feels as if it were a competition.

Some of the most emotional moments from my interviews and from the collective creation workshops were related to how participating in the SAWP turns workers against each other. Lourdes, for example discussed how increased pressure in the workplace increased the hostility in the bunkhouse, and resulted in workers "chewing at each other [nos mascamos entre nosotras]." She talked about how instead of working together, workers were cheating each other at work because they felt it was in their best interest to do so. For example, she reported that workers would spend their lunch hours cleaning up dropped tomatoes from their co-workers in order to add weight to their own boxes.

I argue that what largely develops among workers in the SAWP environment is a group production habitus that is intensely gendered as masculine. Conflict and competition reign supreme in the SAWP workplace, thus producing a workforce of what Salzinger (2003) calls "masculinised super-producers." Masculinity and production are the primary elements that factor

in the development of group habitus in this context. Thus, the SAWP produces a culture in which a) SAWP workers have difficulty developing trusting relationships and b) generally speaking, conflict remains at the inter-worker level, thus hindering the possibility for resistance. While this may not be an entirely new finding in the context of research on the labour process, the material issues related to confinement, such as the regulation of mobility and sexuality, produce a production environment in the SAWP that by necessity seeps into all aspects of workers' daily lives – inside the workplace and out. In the next section, I will explore more deeply the effect these processes have on co-worker relations.

### **‘La Lucha por la Ducha’: Bunkhouse Relations and Narratives of Personal Responsibility**

My participants' experiences of what John called 'slave work' provide the necessary backdrop on which I may add an examination of how Canadian labour immigration practices and intersecting managerial processes of control and surveillance can impact and shape migrant worker relations that take place in intimate spaces. This can be understood more fully through workers' own descriptions of competitive or even hostile relations among workers. This culture of competition reduces the likelihood of workers responding collectively to problems at work. Even in the best of workplace circumstances, the living-at-work arrangement can thwart solidarity among workers. Participant narratives of living at work, the enforcement of bunkhouse regulations, the threat of deportation, and the pace of work collide in the bunkhouse. While some workers, such as Ignacio and Enrique talked about how they were able to develop a support network of friends within the constraints of the SAWP, most workers had difficulty developing friendships and did not feel a larger sense of community among workers. At best, workers discussed how their relationships needed to remain "cordial" (Ian) because "I am not in my house and you are not in yours. All of us are in a place that belongs to none of us" (Emmanuel). Contrary to the development of solidarity and camaraderie, as has been examined in the case of internal migrant workers in Chinese Special Economic Zones (Chan & Pun, 2009), my participants described a situation whereby workers felt isolated and detached even as they lived among large groups of workers experiencing similar problems. In the words of Lourdes, "we are not friends."

Ian described this problem thusly:

We are not friends, but we are not enemies either. We treat each other like co-workers and nothing else. Like, there is no other thing except to get up in the morning and spend your days working. There are occasions when one might feel like offering someone a soft drink, but that's it, nothing more.

Similarly, Iván:

With all people you don't get along. Always you complain about someone about something, and the other person they complain about something, about someone too. All the time are the complaints about everything. Nobody is happy with nobody.

When asked about the potential for developing solidarity among workers, Benjamin's answer is typical of my participants. He took a long time to formulate an answer before finally explaining that it was complicated and difficult to understand exactly why this was the case, but that in his opinion, it was very difficult to develop and maintain friendships, and by extension a sense of community among co-workers in the SAWP. In various ways, this was a sentiment that was often expressed by my participants. The matter of difficult worker relationships was a topic that workers discussed at length during our collective creation workshops, for example. During these sessions, workers illustrated their experiences of bunkhouse relations through examining some of the most banal or everyday bunkhouse interactions. Workers described bitter relationships between workers who were all competing for the dubious distinction of “top dog [el mas chingon]” (Mauricio), or similarly many workers reported that relationships became strained when one worker became promoted to foreman. Some of the most emotional testimony came from participants examining the difficult relationships between younger and older workers. On this topic there was a general perception that each posed a significant risk to the livelihood of the other, leading to resentment and distrust between newer and more experienced co-workers, as shall be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Workers' struggle for access to showers after work, or what became known as “la lucha por la ducha” (literally translated as ‘the struggle for the shower’), a pithy description of bunkhouse living coined by Javier, became a central image through which this theme was explored and

ultimately presented by the collective creation participants. The idea originated from an early theatre workshop, which was attended by only 2 workers (Mauricio and Javier). On this day, I facilitated a Theatre of the Oppressed activity known as Colombian Hypnosis (Boal, 2002, p. 51). It is a very simple activity where one person places the palm of their hand in front of the face of their partner. The leader is instructed to move around the room and it is their partner's role to follow. In the words of Boal, "... the partner must contort his [sic] body in every way possible to maintain the same distance between face and hand, so that face and hand remain parallel" (p. 51). This game was played in silence. After the activity was completed, Mauricio and Javier were asked to reflect on their impressions. Javier talked about how it reminded him of someone walking his dog, or even someone who was teasing a dog with a piece of meat, but was not letting the dog have a taste. Following Javier's descriptions of his perceptions, I asked the two participants if this related to anything in their everyday lives. They responded by discussing how the leader in the game could be interpreted as an older, more experienced co-worker. Both younger workers themselves, they claimed that like the game, more experienced, or older workers hold a lot of power over younger workers. They discussed how it often seemed as though older workers tended to enjoy and take advantage of this power imbalance. Both participants claimed that this type of behaviour put a lot of pressure on newer workers to work faster. While this is an important dynamic that I shall examine in more detail in the following chapter, I will provide some analysis here on inter-generational conflict in order to demonstrate how the narrative of personal responsibility developed through a culture of competition and distrust among workers.

Based on our discussion, Mauricio and Javier decided to improvise a scene in which two workers fight over who gets to use the shower first after a long day at work. In their portrayal, it was the older more experienced worker who won the battle. As I was working with a multi-generational cast, the everyday conflict between different generations of workers became the focal point for developing an understanding of power dynamics in the program. In fact, in interviews I conducted with some audience members after the collective creation performance at the end of my field work, many participants discussed how well this scenario represented their experiences in the bunkhouse. For example, Hidalgo, an SAWP worker from Mexico (age, 26; 1 season) claimed that other workers "shower first. Always. They leave us go last." On this point, there was a general perception among younger workers that older, more experienced workers have

more power, and “this power they use to enact their revenge” (Mauricio) against younger workers. In the words of Jeronimo, a Mexican SAWP worker (age, 46; 9 seasons): “it’s not good to say this but the workers who have a lot of experience don’t treat new workers well. They always treat them a little differently. They think that they will take their jobs away.” Joaquín expressed a similar sentiment when he said, “there are workplaces where a new worker arrives and they say, ‘let’s make his life a misery’.” As well Hidalgo, who said, “There is a lot of selfishness. Many times older workers don’t want to teach what they know.”

During the collective creation workshops, participants decided that the protagonist of the collectively created play should be an SAWP worker in his first year in the program, as participants felt that the trials and tribulations of this character could represent many of the problems that all workers have faced as migrant workers in Canada. In one pivotal scenario, the main character, Jaime was confronted by his employer about not conducting his work efficiently enough or fast enough. Crucially, the workshop participants decided to show how his more experienced co-workers decided not to defend their younger co-worker to their employer, but instead translated the employer’s reprimands from English to Spanish for Jaime. Once the employer left the workers’ work space, one of Jaime’s older co-workers scolded him for making the employer angry, and told him to “throw yourself into your work, Jaime [échale ganas], he said that if you don’t improve, he’ll talk to the consulate.” He added, “I get paid to pick, and not to translate.” From the perspective of Jaime, his co-workers were siding with the employer. In addition to participants’ play creation, these types of interactions between co-workers were often cited in the interviews. Hidalgo, who was in his first season at the time of our interview, described in detail his relationship to one older worker in particular, who he referred to as ‘the foreman [el capataz]’. He said:

He says, ‘we are going to make you fail in Canada. In the farm we are going to make you fail.’ That is what the foreman said. ‘You guys are not going to be work anything. You will never make it here’. Everyday, both he and his brother they were chasing us and making it look to the boss like we are bad workers.

And Hernan, who was also in his first season: “In my case, since I’m new, they talk bad about my work. They think that because they have more experience, they know more than me.” All workshop participants claimed that these were experiences that all newer workers faced when

they started in the program. Joaquín shared a detailed story of how his first few months in Canada were stressful on account of harassment from his older and more experienced co-workers. He stated that if there was one thing that he learned in his 11 years in the SAWP, it was not to trust anyone. For Mauricio these stories were very real and very raw, as he felt he was experiencing this same type of harassment at the time of research and was particularly emotive when discussing the problems that he has experienced with older workers in his workplace. For example, he talked about how these co-workers would harass him in the workplace for his participation in the collective creation workshops, calling him a ‘ballerina’, or would tease him about wanting to learn English or exercise during his free time, thus questioning his rightful place in the group by overtly probing his sexuality and thereby re-inscribing a particular form of masculinity as the dominant gender to which bunkhouse behaviour must comply. He was most upset about how more experienced workers sometimes seemed to manipulate their working bodies in such a way as to make it look as though they were working hard and fast, though he noticed that they just seemed to be moving quickly through the rows, yet leaving a lot of fruit behind. Speaking quickly, emphatically and with a raised voice, he said: “There are old co-workers who have been in the program for 15 years and they go ahead of you but they leave everything really filthy, they do really lousy work, but there they go ahead of everyone.” The older workshop participants agreed that it does not take long for workers to figure out how to make their jobs easier while simultaneously making it appear as though they are being productive. These participants commented on how the workplace may be a safer place for more experienced workers because the employer is paying less attention to them as it is assumed they know what they are doing.

The perspectives provided by older workers on the other hand suggest that older workers may be actively resisting workplace redundancy in the face of a looming threat of being replaced by a younger and more energetic workforce. There is a sense from workshop participants that by treating younger workers poorly, older workers are attempting to maintain a modicum of control in a situation over which they have little power to affect change in any other way. Ignacio, who was in his 20<sup>th</sup> season at the time of our interview, explains his position thus:

Well, look, if I didn't need to come [to Canada], then I just wouldn't come, because for me it is very difficult, because of my age. It is difficult for me. Imagine, I am

working with young men who are 25 years old. There is one guy right now that I think is 22. There is no way I am going to beat him at work.

Participants discussed how this and similar scenarios contribute to a culture of workplace conditioning, in which younger workers are being trained by older workers to be ultra-competitive in the workplace. Both Ignacio and Jorge point out that this only serves to increase production and reduce the employers' cost of doing business. They related this phenomenon to how in the past few years, employers seem to be hiring fewer workers while simultaneously demanding an increase in production. In the words of Mauricio:

They [the older workers] can really fuck you over, but in two years I'll be able to make *them* work really hard [traer en chinga]. That's not good. I shouldn't be thinking like that. Because at the end of the day, the one who is winning is the boss. At the end of the day, the work that one does over here, it was done by 15 people; right now it's done by 11 people. For next year there will only be 10. Because, like, it is the fault of our own egos... This only serves the boss. And it is my own fault [Y es la gotera mía]. Like, I'm submitting myself to the boss. He saves, ah \$80,000 a year. Why? Because I demonstrate that I am such a big shot. That I've fucked over everyone else.

In this quote Mauricio is both putting the blame on workers and recognizing how the context of workplace conditions contributes to this dynamic. This presents some evidence toward a contradictory subject formation process in the sense that on the one hand Mauricio rejects the 'every man for himself' attitude while at the same time recognizing that in order to succeed in this context he will himself have to give in and play the game like everyone else. Mauricio knows that he will eventually need to become the masculinized hyper-producing subject that he is so self-consciously critical of during this conversation. On the one hand Iván, like Mauricio above is rebelling against the system, but is also expressing agency in so far as he is making the conscious choice to participate. The following quote from Leontiev (1978/2009) may go some of the way to helping clarify this contradictory position:

V.I. Lenin wrote about what distinguishes 'simply a slave' from a slave who is reconciled to his position and from a slave who has rebelled. This difference lies not in knowing one's own individual traits but in perceiving oneself in a system of social relations... It is only necessary to emphasize here that inclusion in the

system does not at all mean begin dissolved in it but, on the contrary, means finding and disclosing in it the force of one's action (p. 189).

Mauricio was not the only participant to express the idea that workers should be held accountable for developing an 'every man for himself' environment of competition and individualism among workers. In fact, putting the blame on workers was a theme that was expressed frequently by many research participants. Many of these framed such relations as the result of a cultural defect that compels members of the same ethnic group, be it Mexicans, Filipinos, Trinidadians, or Guatemalans, to impede each other's success, which recalls Frantz Fanon's ideas surrounding the internalization of oppression among colonized populations (Fanon, 2004/1963). For example, Joaquín, who claimed that "I think that this is a part of our culture, as Mexicans, I feel that for us there is a lot of selfishness." Similarly, Hidalgo claimed that the problem in the SAWP "is not the employers. Most of the time, it is not the employers, but our very own people – Mexicans. We give the power to the employers to do as they like. That's the problem." For one worker in particular, Iván, it was precisely the attitude that workers themselves are somehow individually responsible for their own oppression that over time contributed to his reaching his breaking point. Of this he said: "That thing really pissed me off – that thing made me think that I really was a slave." That notwithstanding, Iván, who was fired from this workplace for complaining to the employer about workplace conditions, felt as though workers who had been on this farm for a long time were particularly guilty of enduring dehumanizing treatment, as he said they refused to do anything about it. On one notable occasion Iván claimed to have had the following interaction with a co-worker:

I asked him, "How long have you been here?" "Oh I been here 8 years, 9 years..." "On this farm?" He said, "yeah." "You been 8 years with this asshole?" And he said "yeah, and I know how the things going on." I said, "you seen the way they treat you?" He said, "yeah." "And you like it?" He said, "you know, I don't like it, but we came to work." I said "yeah, but we want to be treated like people who come to work, not like a slave." I know he's a slave, and I told him that.

Elsewhere, Iván advocated for workers to accept personal responsibility for SAWP practices that hurt workers. He said:

If some part of your life you blame someone, or somebody, for everything, or anything, even a little thing it's happening to you even good or bad, it means you're not taking 100% of your responsibility. So you gotta learn to take that 100% responsibility for your own life.

This sentiment was most clearly articulated by Mauricio, who claimed that any oppression or exploitation that he experienced through his participation in the SAWP was the result “my own weakness [la gotera mía].” Like the workers quoted here, many research participants questioned the role of workers themselves in supporting oppressive and precarious working conditions.

### **Conclusion**

By engaging with workers' own experiences of participating in Canada's SAWP, in this chapter I have attempted to reveal some of the ways in which colonial relations develop within Canada's managed 'low skilled' labour migration program. While it is certainly the case that SAWP workers should not be considered 'slaves', workers' own impressions of SAWP employment as related to 'slave work' serve to illustrate the profound imbalance of power generated within the program (Perry, 2012b). In this chapter I have developed the notion of 'slave work' through workers' narratives of confinement, precarious immigration status, challenging workplace and living conditions, and the pressure to work fast. Instead of contributing to a sense of solidarity among workers, research participants have largely reported that the SAWP experience engenders an environment in which intense competition and inter-worker rivalries are the norm. This is a gendering experience for workers, as the labour and migration practices associated with the SAWP produce worker subjects which are predominantly masculinized. As such, these practices contribute to a worker habitus grounded in inter-worker rivalry that serves to maximize industrial production and minimize the effects of community and camaraderie. In the non-work related sphere of the intimate, workers generally described a particularly desexualized environment where the regulation of sexuality and mobility in the dormitory was so universal as to be considered normal. This overt attempt to eliminate sexual practices from the sphere of workers' lives produces an atmosphere in which gender is in a sense unmarked and more obscured, making masculinization in the workplace more easily absorbed. This is an environment in which conflict and competition are horizontal and thus remain at the level of inter-worker relations in both the bunkhouse and the workplace. On the other hand, my research reveals that some

workers are overtly critical of workers' own role in developing an SAWP habitus that serves the interests of capital production. However, workers' overt decision to continue to participate in a system they felt was harmful to both themselves and to the group as a whole produced complex and contradictory worker subjectivities that are both critical and accommodating of SAWP social relations and practices. In the following chapter I explore my research participants' experiences of accommodation and opposition. By focusing on workers' everyday forms of adaptation and defiance, in Chapter 7 I attempt to advance an understanding of how workers perform individual forms of agency in daily life and how workers' individual responses to difficult workplace situations further impact worker relations.

### **Chapter 7: Adaptation and Opposition: Workers' Portrayals of Survival and Competition**

In this chapter I will provide a description and an analysis of SAWP workers' perceptions and experiences of adapting to and opposing disciplinary work and (im)migration processes in their daily lives. These perceptions and experiences are informed by workers' descriptions of control and surveillance as discussed in the previous chapter. This is to say that workers' individual and collective responses to problems at work must be placed within the context of confinement and discipline as described above. That notwithstanding, in spite of worker narratives that depict the SAWP labour process as an instance of 'slave work', the majority of my research participants did not primarily perceive themselves as 'victims'. Instead, workers' narratives also highlight their own agency and decision-making capacities in spite of the enormous constraints. Research participants provided many examples of what could be described as individual workers enacting a certain margin of freedom in a context otherwise marked by captivity, constrained mobility and routinized acceptance. Theoretically, this chapter primarily engages with notions of agency and performance as examined in Chapter 3. In particular, in this chapter I am primarily interested in understanding workers' experiences of agency expressed as the daily struggle between discipline and freedom (Pun, 2005). As such, in the following pages I attempt to answer the question of how the subjective experience of employment for workers in Canada's SAWP is shaped by workers' individual and collective responses to a system of domination so comprehensive as to organize nearly all of their social relations both at home and at work.

In the pages that follow I discuss how workers' responses ranged from quiet accommodation to outright opposition and tended to be described by workers themselves as strategies of survival on both the individual and collective scale. These actions occurred in a political and social context defined by precarious immigration status and the amalgamation of home and work in which cramped living quarters, the intense pressure to be productive, and consequently a hyper-masculinized culture of industrial production are the norm. Workers' individual responses to despotic employment practices do not therefore occur in a political and social vacuum, but rather affect the group as a whole. This analysis follows from Goffman's (1959) observations that 'everyday performances of the self' have a tendency to represent the collectively accepted social norms of a given group, and thus individual expressions of identity must be understood in the social and political context in which they take place. At the same time, individual survival strategies can both strengthen and disturb the socially acceptable subject position of 'migrant

farm worker', and may thus significantly impact worker relations in the bunkhouse and in the workplace. Whether deferential or oppositional, workers responses to their living and working conditions are presented here as not only embodied and embedded in workers' particular context but integrally, as instances of social interaction (Goffman, 1959; Newby, 1975). With this in mind, my data suggests that that while the responses to problems in the bunkhouse/workplace are not collectively organized per se, there is an element of tacit yet fragile complicity that can both give shape to and contradict individual workers' actions in such a way that tends to emphasize a generational fracture among workers. Put simply, I argue that over time SAWP workers come to develop tacitly accepted group rituals that support workers' collective adaptation to the norms of confinement and immobility that are fundamental to the SAWP. Throughout the chapter, I engage workers' voices in order to explore how these tacit yet collectively agreed upon ways of being clash with workers who have not yet been fully integrated into SAWP culture, resulting in the dialectical performance of both the rejection and integration of new and younger workers. This is a process that can both condition newer workers to adopt acceptable forms of behaviour and lead workers to adopt more extreme forms of individual opposition.

### **Bodily Movements and Learning to Cope**

Near the beginning of the theatrical workshop phase, I began to explore the concept of 'action' with a small group of four research participants. We began our examination by exploring through physical movement what actions workers execute in their everyday lives, and through a follow-up discussion how much control workers felt they could exercise over these daily actions. The idea was to examine the meaning of 'action', not by asking workers directly, but rather by engaging in the individual creation and collective analysis of non-verbal physical improvisations of how each participant engaged their body in the bunkhouse/workplace. This approach follows Boal's (2006) position that engaging with embodied images or movements, in contrast to words, prioritizes a way of knowing that necessarily involves the body as well as the intellect. As such, in the analysis that followed their short presentations, participants were invited to let their "memories and imagination wander" (p. 175). This follows from Broyles-Gonzales' (1994) analysis of the use of popular forms of theatre with Mexican-American agricultural workers in the Chicano movement in California in the 1960s. In particular, she highlights the importance of memory and the body as central vehicles of cultural transmission within Mexican oral culture. In her words: "Memory should not be understood here as a cerebral, individualistic, psychological

process, but in its collective and *physical* manifestation: as remembrance and transmission of the community's knowledge through that community's performance forms..." (p. 15). The examination of action that prefaces this chapter, then, must be understood in the context of engaging research participants not just through the individual verbal recreation of memories, but rather through collective and physical engagement with memory and knowledge.

With this in mind, each participant was invited to demonstrate an action to share on the stage for their fellow participants. On this day, four participants were in attendance, Mauricio (26/1), Ignacio (62/20), Joaquín (47/11) and Javier (45/11) and each chose to present an action from their work in the greenhouse industry, such as picking tomatoes or tying the vines of tomato plants. My first observation of these workers' presentations was how detailed participants' physical movements were and how quickly and easily workers were able to set the scene for the audience. None of my research participants had any acting training or experience, yet each of them seemed able to communicate complex ideas and scenarios through their bodies with ease and precision. When I asked why they thought this may be the case, all of the participants agreed that the actions that they performed on the stage were examples of movements that they each carry out in their jobs in every moment of every day. For this activity, each participant decided to demonstrate an action that each described as so familiar as to be etched permanently into their memories. In other words, workers' daily actions, though they may have been difficult to express through words, could easily be recreated through bodily movements, as these were movements that they claimed their bodies could never forget. In the words of Mauricio:

We do these activities all day everyday. These actions are impossible to forget. When I started working, I knew nothing. But when I saw the greenhouse (he made a gesture with his arm indicating the sheer size of the greenhouse operation) I knew that I would soon be an expert, because I'd have so much practice.

While at the beginning of the workshop process participants did not necessarily have a sense of agency within the work process itself, through dramatic and kinesthetic interrogation, workers used their bodies to think through the ways in which they may or may not have some mastery over their own bodies in the context of their jobs. Interrogating bodily movement in the research arena thus brought to the surface knowledge that for the most part had remained tacit. So while these participants may not have been overtly aware of how production habitus developed, the

process of reflecting on their physical movements provided an avenue for surfacing, and potentially for reflecting on the unconscious development of individual and group rituals in the workplace. Examining in a group setting how workers do indeed have some mastery over their own bodies provoked the idea among participants that they had some control over regulating the bodily strain and mental anxiety associated with difficult physical and emotional workplace and living situations. By bringing to light this embodied process, the introduction of an active and kinesthetic research approach may have contributed to a critical reflection on the development of everyday habits that contribute to capitalist production, a pedagogical process that Ng (2011) refers to as decolonizing education.

My initial reaction to participants' portrayals of repetitive workplace actions was to comment on how workers seemed to have very little control over the monotonous or even tedious actions they performed in the workplace. Before enlisting workers own observations, I remarked that it seemed as though workers had very little command over the actions they performed at work. However, after participating in the exercise Mauricio expressed his disagreement. He explained how the exercise provoked a reflection on how the formation of repetitive workplace movements indeed felt like a creative enterprise and not just the unconscious performance of tacitly performed repetitive movements. He told the group that creative action perhaps does occur in the workplace, most notably at the level of workers' micro-decisions from moment to moment throughout the day. For example, in examining his own performance he reflected on how he has learned to work with one hand by holding his scissors with two fingers and holding three tomatoes with his other three fingers. He reflected on how this made his work more efficient, and most notably how he created this system on his own, as he did not receive formal workplace training. In response to Mauricio's reflections, the other three participants, Ignacio, Joaquín and Javier, discussed how workers should consider the ways in which they can make their work-related bodily movements the most efficient possible. This was important, they said, in particular in order to avoid what they considered to be the two most significant potential problems that could occur at any moment during the work day: a confrontation with the employer and a workplace injury. Methodologically speaking, an embodied in kinaesthetic approach to examining the micro-dimensions of the labour process revealed some surprising ways in which workers can and do perform agency. In particular how micro forms of agency at the level of

bodily movements, while integral to workers' everyday lives, seem to occur at a tacit level and without much thought.

These four participants' comments on how creativity and decision-making processes factor into the performance of workplace actions revealed something about how individual workers express agency at the micro level of bodily movements in the workplace. More than that, an examination of workers' actions at this level may begin to reveal something about how migrant workers effectively perform both resilience and opposition at work and in the bunkhouse. Approaching the concept of action by starting from workers' embodied experiences of action and subsequent group reflections on of how they use their bodies in everyday settings revealed a surprising variety of ways that workers come to understand what constitutes 'action' in their daily lives. As was the case in the exercise described above, research participants typically discussed 'action' in relation to how workers were able to foster strategies and tactics to cope in the most efficient ways possible with daily life in the SAWP. These strategies ranged from developing a cadre of accommodating performances on the one end of the spectrum to being overtly oppositional towards employers and state officials in the face workplace injustices on the other. These participant narratives reveal how workers' own actions may both contribute to and resist the pull toward accepting a 'migrant worker' subjectivity bound by a characterization of workers as primarily compliant and docile.

### **Adaptation and Opposition: The Dialectic of Discipline and Freedom as Coping Mechanism**

One of the most striking elements that arose from the activity described above was how the decisions workers made in the realm of personal adaptation were a primary form of control they could exercise in daily life. No worker expressed this more concisely and plainly than Benjamin, who said, stoically of the SAWP: "It's a little bit difficult, but one learns to adapt." As with Benjamin, there was a sense from many research participants that the adaptation process was difficult but necessary. Mauricio expressed this thusly: "When workers don't adapt or find new ways of adapting, there can be trouble." When I refer to adaptation here I am referring to participants' own descriptions of a process of gradual transformation into what could be described as an efficient SAWP worker. On this topic, Ignacio referred to the need to "put on a mask" for the eight months that he is in Canada. For Ignacio, the idea of wearing a mask was an

essential component in his ability to “program” himself for his life as an SAWP worker. Ignacio first made reference to self-programming during his discussion of a workplace accident early on in his life in the SAWP that involved the tragic deaths of two of his co-workers. These deaths represented a key moment in Ignacio’s work history and prompted a great deal of self-reflection as well as an awareness of the need to develop coping strategies that could help him to become resilient to the challenges and risks associated with participating in the SAWP. Ignacio described how this incidence triggered an acute awareness of both how he manipulated his body at work and how he conducted himself more generally while in Canada. He explained how he came to understand the importance of mentally and psychologically preparing himself for a life of perpetual labour migration and precarious work. He described how his personal method of mental preparation involved suspending parts of himself that he felt might interfere with his work or place his physical safety at risk. Ignacio’s suspension of these aspects of his identity constituted a personal transformation, however temporary, from Ignacio as husband, father or friend into Ignacio as simply ‘worker’. This personal transformation, or what Ignacio referred to as “self-programming” became a crucial element in his ability to endure life in the SAWP. This theme of personal transformation was not unique to Ignacio and can be seen in the narratives of many workers. This signals that while on a social level workers are susceptible to unconsciously falling into the habit of developing group rituals and performances in the workplace and the bunkhouse that degrade solidarity and do harm to the group as a whole, on a more personal level, workers do actively attempt to find ways of reducing harm to themselves as they travel through the program. As was the case for Ignacio, the idea of mental preparedness or of learning to become a worker was often associated with integral moments in a worker’s life that may have precipitated a change in perception or behaviour. For some workers, like Ignacio, this meant developing strategies of resilience or even of accommodation, while for others this transformation meant learning to be oppositional in the face of everyday injustices.

Iván, for example, talked about the need for workers to defend themselves against exploitative employers and state officials. He discussed how this was a point of view that developed over his years in the program as a result of the cumulative effect of participating in the SAWP. Over the course of his interview he talked about how the years of cramped dormitories and difficult relations between his co-workers and supervisors were difficult to tolerate. For example, he talked about his first experience of coming to Canada thusly:

I was 26 years old when I came. And my whole life, like for example from the family that I come from, only we're two members family, and in the house we were four, only my parents and my sister. But most of the time, all the time that we were just my sister and me, you know, like practically always we were alone.

So when he first joined the SAWP, he was particularly struck by the close living quarters, which made him uncomfortable. He expressed how he was unused to staying in a single-sex dormitory with so many other men. He was also surprised at how long his co-workers had been in the program. He was convinced from the first year that he would not be like them. He said:

When I came, that time, the first time that I came out of my country, when I came here, and being with eight guys in one room, and 64, I mean 54 in the whole house oh man, that thing drive me crazy. I said to myself I'm not gonna be in the program 24 years, doing the same thing for 24 years. I'm not... I think I'm capable for more than that.

He told me that over time his perception of the program and of life in Canada began to change. He said: "You know when you learn, and you get a new knowledge about something, a lot of things change. And one thing that changes is your perspective about what you were thinking before." He said that when he first began participating in the program he had the impression that life in Canada would be "like a wonderland", but in due course he described his changed impressions. He described this change thusly: "I was like open eyes when I see a lot of things that are going on here." For Iván, the psychological strain of working in the SAWP climaxed in his final year when he was sent to work on the vineyard described above. He portrayed this time as the moment when he started to feel like he "really was a slave." He described how his job in the vineyard brought into sharp relief all of the items that he did not like about the program. These were things like confinement, social isolation, cramped living quarters, feeling trapped, and especially a sense of collective acquiescence among his co-workers. While in the past, as in the example of Mauricio above, he had been a willing participant in this collective acceptance, Iván described a situation where he was not able to leave the farm, as he had in his previous workplace, and this left him feeling especially alone with his feelings. That his co-workers simply could not relate made him feel that he was somehow different and that he just did not

belong in the program anymore. This prompted a transformation in Iván and described how he felt more free toward becoming more resistant in his daily life toward those from whom he received treatment he deemed unacceptable, culminating in a direct confrontation with his employer regarding substandard working and living conditions. Like Iván, other workers, such as Enrique, also emphasized the need for individual or small groups of workers to speak out against injustice in the form of being directly oppositional with the employer. In the words of Enrique:

Look, with many of my co-workers, when they get scolded, they don't say anything. They are scared that if they say something they'll be thrown off the farm. I always tell them, look: each of us might be ok now, but if one of us gets sick tomorrow, the bosses are not going to show you any gratitude or help you with money for what you say. No. They send you home and they won't ask for you back. Here, we work for a time and they will treat you well, but the boss will turn and say 'send him back to Hell [mándalo por carajo]', because that is how they are like with us.

For those research participants who emphasized the need for workers to stand up against injustice, these acts constituted definitive moments in their work and migration history, given the risk is involved. As such, when workers such as Iván or Enrique discussed their decisions to defend themselves against the employer or state officials, they tended to frame these decisions as really emotional and integral moments in their lives in Canada. This was the case not only because by speaking out they risked their position in the program, but also because they risked punishment from their co-workers for having caused trouble. For these workers, these decisions were often accompanied by serious material consequences. For example: Iván's decision to defend himself at work did in fact result in his repatriation to Mexico and for Enrique this resulted in not being asked back to his workplace the following year. In order to illustrate the results of speaking out about injustice Iván described the conversation he had with a Mexican Ministry of Labour official on his return to Mexico City:

He said, "ok listen, I have the list here, 1200 people to send that I haven't sent yet, and they're still waiting for a position and you got one and you didn't care. Now you gotta stand on the line and wait until I send all those 1200 guys."

Despite the inherent risks to speaking out, Iván recommended that fellow SAWP workers not be afraid to learn English and use this knowledge as a tool to defend themselves against employment practices that exploit workers. In his words:

Well you know the best advice is to learn the language, to learn English. I think that would be the best advice. And not be afraid to use it. Because I know a lot of guys, they know, but they afraid to use it. Actually you know what, that's one of the lessons that I learned: you gotta feel the thrill of it, and do it.

Elsewhere during the interview he summarized his position thusly:

I never shut my mouth, when they do something I don't like, I don't care who I'm talking with, I answer it. It's the way they make me feel right away, right in that moment, you know? Doesn't matter who is the person, if he's the boss, the top boss, or whatever he is, if you are an asshole with me, or if you're doing something like, it's not nice... I answer back, no matter what.

On the other hand, workers such as Enrique talked about the need to approach the employer about workplace problems in a more diplomatic fashion in order to mitigate potential risks. He provided one example of this approach. He said:

I needed to talk to him very seriously, because I can get more problems, even bigger ones from the consulate, and we don't want, um, getting the consulate involved because they say there are lots of problems there. So, I went and told him that I left work an hour early because he was yelling at me and making a gesture for me to leave, and that is no way to talk to a person.

John on the other hand discussed a more pragmatic approach to coping with life in the SAWP in which he incorporated both elements of accommodation and of opposition, depending on the situation and on his perception of the potential risks entailed. Similar to Ignacio, John, who called the SAWP “a very stressful piece of work”, credited his success in the program to his ability to be prepared not only for the physical labour, but also for the psychological pressures that accompany the work. In his interview, John talked at length about the need to mentally

prepare himself before coming to Canada, stressing in particular the need to continuously remind himself of the need to accept that his work in Canada would consistently fall below his expectations. He said:

Mentally, what I do is I tell guys that when I am up here they ask me how it is I can be calm and cool about it. I learn one thing from folks back home and my life back home is I always leave room for disappointment. I always leave that room, that space, for disappointment. I tell a guy already I say let me tell you something: when you in the program... never go out there with the intent that when you go out there to work you'll be working every day. Don't go out there and think that when you get paid your salary will be 400 or 500 a week. Some days you might get 60 dollars in your hand because he didn't have enough hours or the farmer or contractor didn't prepare enough work for you to achieve a higher salary. Some of the farmers do not care.

Other workers, in particular Lucas, shared a similar strategy of preparing for disappointment. He said:

If I think about all the bad that exists here, of what they are doing to me, and all that is happening to me, than that would really make me disappointed. That helps you to overcome what bad there is. It's the only option that I can imagine (Lucas).

Like the workshop participants above, John also talked about the need to control his body at work in order to avoid both confrontations with the employer and physical injury. For example, John discussed how his mental preparation meant he could work harder and smarter. Of this he said: "Once put your mind to doing something there is nothing you can't achieve at the end of the day." While he complained during his interview about the intense pace of work, he also talked about developing strategies for coping with the pressure to work fast and hard, and focused on "smart ways to get things done." Depending on the work context, for John being smart at work could involve several different approaches. Sometimes he talked about the need to pressure himself and his fellow co-workers to work beyond their physical limits during piece work, for

example advocating taking shorter lunch breaks in order to make more money as a group. He said: “And I believe that if all of us come here to work we done go through a struggle, let's try to get the job done right... together.” At other times he talked about the need to reserve much needed energy so as not to become physically or mentally overcome by the work. He said:

When I start workin', I am not here to impress no boss. No no no, that's not me. I cannot be the fastest guy in the ability to cut the tobacco fast. I know how it fell the other workers. So I will not go there to show off, number one. If I have the speed it takes to get down there 'cause I have de height and de strength I will not be doin' dat because I will come 13 guys or 9 guys. I know I will be towin' these guys along. If I run through my work, and force them to push their bodies, two, three guys collapse they will come back to a dead slow.

Throughout his entire interview John was conscious of not working so hard as to cause injury or privilege the needs of the employer over his own because “the majority of time, to me... we don't come out winning. The farmers do.” For John, this meant that he would generally not tolerate situations he felt were overly exploitative or particularly dangerous. After once encountering such a situation, he confronted state officials in charge of recruitment on his return to Trinidad and Tobago. He recounted to me the conversation that he had with this recruitment officer thusly:

I'm a human being, I didn't go to be treated like some thing like they experimenting on, some human they experimenting on to see if I could withstand this type of treatment all kind of thing. I told her I say ‘I am not a slave I was never a slave, I don't think any of my foreparents were slaves...’It was very oppressive, so I stood up and I talked about it. I said, ‘anywhere you send me from now on, I have a mental barrier that I try to build up. I try to set up myself mentally to go there because I would expect the worst and would expect the very best, so when you sending me somewhere, if you hear anything about that particular farmer or my employer, make sure if he is a guy that likes to give people a rough time, do not send me there. I will be very opposing. I will be very opposing in getting his work done. I will not do it with a good mind, because if he don't care about my livelihood,I won't care about his. Simple as that.

During his interview John provided many examples of how he confronted his employers directly about inhumane working and living conditions, for example claiming to have told his employers at different times “to do some soul searching” and that “you don’t have that love for human beings and for what it takes for them to come out here and work hard.”

The approaches toward responding to the challenges of participating in the SAWP as described by the workers discussed in this section were eloquently summarized by Enrique, who said (as quoted earlier): “I’m not afraid of any boss. I have always said, if the boss comes and yells at me, he has no right and I will respond, but if he is right, and I made a mistake I also have to give in, because they are the ones who set the rules.” Enrique’s quote ties these different approaches together and reveals how workers’ processes of negotiation entail a constant struggle between discipline and freedom. Workers’ daily negotiation between accommodating to employers’ demands and defending oneself against abuse is fundamental to not only the development of individual coping strategies, but also the formation of SAWP worker subjectivity more generally.

### **Exploring Adaptation and Opposition through Collective Creation**

The decision to either settle or speak out as a central theme contributing to worker subjectivity was clearly articulated through group improvisations developed during the collective creation workshops. In particular, in these sessions workers explored how the decision-making process surrounding the development of individual survival strategies affects and is affected by the culture of competition and challenging co-worker relations described in more detail in the previous chapter. In keeping with my exploration of workers’ daily lives through engaging participants’ bodies through dramatic creation and performance, our group exploration of action described above led to participants creating scenarios that contained elements from both the bunkhouse and the workplace. In these scenarios, our fictional protagonist (*Jaime*), a greenhouse worker at the beginning of his first contract (played first by Mauricio, and then by Enrique), was confronted by the employer for not working fast or efficiently enough. The crest of these scenes focused on how *Jaime* decided to respond to his Canadian boss. *Jaime*’s<sup>xxix</sup> ultimate decision to directly oppose the employer was placed in the context of a competitive workplace and social environment in which difficult co-worker relations may have contributed to workers’ decisions to respond and possibly exacerbate the negative consequences of individual workers’ resistance. The scenarios presented Jaime as lagging behind two of his co-workers (played by Joaquín and Javier), both of whom had been participating in the program and returning to the same

greenhouse over the course of many years. Participants developed the workplace scene in such a way that demonstrated how more experienced workers were able to move faster and thus could incur less attention from the employer or foreman. At one point the employer (played by Ignacio) entered the scene and noticed that *Jaime* was having trouble maintaining the pace of his co-workers and that he was not doing his job properly. He began to follow *Jaime*, all the while yelling at him for not picking correctly or not moving fast enough. Eventually, the employer stopped all of the workers in order to reprimand Jaime more directly. During the rehearsals I asked Enrique how his character (*Jaime*) felt in this very moment of being yelled at by the employer. He told me that Jaime felt very sad because he was new to the program and he felt that it was unfair that the boss was scolding him so intensely. Enrique explored his character's options by examining his feelings and potential responses through the mechanism of an inner monologue (Boal, 2006, p. 219) whereby he voiced his character's thoughts verbatim. Here is an example of Jaime's internal monologue (as created by Enrique):

Oh, how much he makes me angry that damned boss. He walks behind me all the time. I'm still new and he never gives me the chance to learn. Always he's right behind me. How I can't stand how I come here and they discriminate against me. I'll show him... I'll show him... if he continues to reprimand me I'm going to drop him to the ground with a tomato [darle un tomatazo ahorita para que se caiga]. To tell the truth, I regret coming here. He's making my blood boil. This is shit. I'm going back to Mexico. If I knew it would be like this I would never have come.

Interestingly, Enrique confided in the group that improvising the thoughts and feelings of *Jaime* in this fictional situation proved to be a particularly potent moment for him, as he admitted afterwards that a very similar situation had occurred to him personally in his actual workplace only the day before our rehearsal. Enrique was thus able to bring to his role a certain authenticity grounded in his own true to life experiences. In the words of Broyles-Gonzales (1994): "...oral culture is typically not just spoken words but words defined by their lifeworld context, hence inseparable from that context and from the body and voice that utters them" (p. 5). After several rehearsals, the group decided that for the ultimate performance Jaime should confront the boss directly in order to fully explore what would happen next.

In the scene that participants ultimately created, *Jaime* became visibly upset and openly criticized the employer for not providing adequate training, and claimed that that was why he was not able to keep up with his more experienced co-workers. Fearful that the employer would punish the workers as a group for *Jaime*'s perceived transgression, his co-workers refused to translate *Jaime*'s words into English, and instead responded with things like, "oh I didn't hear what he said. I was working" (*Co-worker 2*). This made the employer more upset, and he confronted *Jaime*'s co-workers for not showing *Jaime* the proper way to do the work. The boss threatened to contact the Mexican consulate the following day in order to intervene if the work did not improve, and he stormed out of the greenhouse. Once the employer was gone, *Jaime*'s two co-workers confronted *Jaime* about opposing the employer. *Co-worker 1* (played by Javier) said: "Why did you react so insultingly? That's not good, man. At the beginning you have to behave... and you just gave him the whole alphabet [le dijiste el alfabeto completo]." <sup>xxx</sup> *Co-worker 2* (played by Joaquín), who was playing the role of greenhouse foreman (also an SAWP worker), responded with the following line: "And that represents a problem for us too, because he wanted me to translate what you were saying, and you were saying rude things. I won't repeat those to him." In addition, they claimed that the employer may punish them all for being accomplices, and if that were to happen it would be his entire fault. To return to a Goffmanesque analysis, this social interaction between *Jaime*, his employer and his co-workers can be understood as a form of 'negative idealization' (Goffman, 1959, p. 40) in the sense that when *Jaime*'s co-workers were confronted by the employer for *Jaime*'s transgression they tended to moderate their status in front of the employer by downplaying their ability to translate. At the same time, these co-workers confronted *Jaime* for disrupting the performance of expected roles – at once establishing the societal norm and squashing the potential risk that *Jaime* represents to the collectively agreed upon performance.

Back in the bunkhouse, the foreman gave *Jaime* a hard time about attending English classes after work. For example, he taunted *Jaime* with lines like "Instead of going to English class you should stay and clean the oven. Look, the floor is dirty." When *Jaime* eventually left the bunkhouse in order to attend classes in town, his co-workers talked about him behind his back concerning how he got them into trouble with the boss earlier and how if he does not improve at work they will all be dealing with the Mexican consulate. "And even with that problem looming," complained *Jaime*'s co-worker/foreman, "he *still* goes to learn English." On his way back from

English classes, *Jaime* overheard some of what his co-workers were saying, and when he entered the kitchen he confronted his co-workers, who teased him for wanting to learn English and insinuated that he was just interested in flirting with the pretty teachers.<sup>xxxii</sup> His co-workers concluded the discussion by warning him not to go to English classes the following night, but instead to stay in and clean so as to make up for what had happened earlier in the greenhouse. *Jaime's* foreman said: "Tomorrow you don't go to English classes. You have problems at work, and if some co-worker tells the boss that you are not doing your share of the cleaning, that will make it worse. Tomorrow stay and clean." *Jaime* went to his dorm and called his wife. This was *Jaime's* side of the conversation he had with her:

I'm not really happy because the work is hard. The boss yelled at me three times today. And my co-workers, they've been here a long time and they don't like being around me. I think they're from the city. They get along well with the boss. I feel discouraged. I regret coming, but I have to do it for the kids, because I have no work back home. Everything that is happening is for the best. When I get back to Mexico I'll go to the Ministry of Labour and try to get sent somewhere else. I don't want to come back here. Good night, my love. I love you.

The bunkhouse scene ended with *Jaime* lying on his cot unable to sleep; alone in his thoughts yet surrounded by his sleeping co-workers.

In the play that my research participants created *Jaime's* older more experienced co-workers did not express any sympathy to the fact that *Jaime* was new to the program. There was no recognition on the part of his co-workers that he was struggling with a new and stressful working environment in a new country where he was detached from all of his support networks. *Jaime* expected that his co-workers would help to facilitate the integration process into the bunkhouse and the workplace. Notably, this was a desire that all participants claimed to have had when they first came to work in the program. Younger workers had the expectation that they would be surrounded by fellow compatriots, and that this would help to alleviate the challenges of coming to a new country and to starting a new life in the SAWP. While there were certainly exceptions, as I shall explore in the following chapter, in the interviews many workers expressed disappointment in not being able to connect to their fellow workers in such a way that could

build solidarity and a strong social network. Like many of these workers, *Jaime* was confronted with aggression and ignorance. This was in violation of an unspoken yet powerful sense of moral obligation that left younger workers feeling isolated among their peers – a feeling that could go some of the way to illuminating the extent to which younger workers were critical of older workers as expressed previously. I argue that my research participants’ portrayal of strained bunkhouse relations as primarily represented through a generational fissure can benefit from Portilla’s (1966/2012) description of *relajo* as examined in Chapter 3. More than just mocking or teasing Jaime for wanting to attend English classes in his free time, his co-workers attempt to negate the value of *Jaime*’s desire. Jaime exudes an excitement and energy in the face of this new opportunity in a new country. It is precisely this enthusiasm that his co-workers are intent on spoiling. What *Jaime* is excited about is the notion that his participation in the SAWP may bring about a newfound freedom. He expressed this freedom as both the opportunity to better support his family financially and as the desire to gain new knowledge and experiences through participating in English classes. This appeal to freedom was crushed in the bunkhouse – essentially undone by the hostility expressed by his co-workers. Feeling dejected, *Jaime*’s initial excitement was eventually replaced by discouragement from attaining the full realization of freedom, essentially negating “action in its cradle” (Portilla, 1966/2012, p. 188)

Thus far, in this chapter I have explored generally how the concept of ‘action’ and in particular workers’ portrayals of their decisions to incorporate strategies of adaptation and opposition fall within the general frame of workers’ individual approaches towards everyday survival in the context of confinement, surveillance and isolation in Canada’s SAWP. The workplace and bunkhouse scenarios created in the collective creation workshops by research participants Enrique, Ignacio, Javier, Joaquín and Mauricio show a number of different tactics that workers employ in this regard. I argue that these worker-created scenarios and collective improvisations provide a critical glimpse at some of the ways workers engage in forms of adaptation and opposition. This is in keeping with oral cultural practices associated with performance as examined by Broyles-Gonzales (1994), who says: “A critique is usually implicit or explicit, lines are drawn, sides are taken, other viewed askance, solutions to problems are put forth or implied” (p. 25). Specifically, through the process of collective improvisation research participants were able to critically examine how inter-personal relationships may shape individual workers’ coping strategies and conversely, how these strategies may in turn affect co-worker relations. In the

following section I will examine this theme more closely as it emerged from the collective creation process and set against worker narratives from the one-on-one interviews.

### **Survival Strategies and Co-worker Relations: A Generational Clash**

The theme of manipulating your body to withstand the high pace and difficult demands of the SAWP workplace is one that runs throughout my participants' narratives. These are survival techniques that generally take place at the level of workers' embodied interactions with the objects of agricultural production and hence tend to be characterized as tactics which are particularly individualized and unorganized. As I discussed in the previous chapter, SAWP practices of confinement, the constant threat of deportation and other punitive employer strategies that encourage inter-worker rivalries, such as implementing piece work, create an environment hostile to worker collaboration. Concerted efforts on the part of workers to resist harmful or exploitative workplace conditions may thus be obstructed. The stark contrast between workers' experiences of just getting by further reveals how the larger socio-political context of the SAWP plays an integral role in inhibiting even the most everyday forms of overt or tacit small group interventions. On the other hand, workers with a lot of experience in the program discuss how older workers may indeed develop tacitly understood norms of conduct which are meant to ease the everyday burdens associated with the living-at-work arrangement. These tacitly learned standards may not be universal and may indeed exclude some workers while benefitting others. In particular, when research participants explored the different styles of action that workers undertook at work, the majority talked about a generational rift that was responsible for intra-worker rivalries and a general sense of overall friction in the bunkhouse/workplace. In general, older workers expressed how their positions in the program were threatened by incoming groups of younger and more energetic workers while younger workers talked about their more experienced colleagues as overly complacent and obstructive. Given the pervasiveness of these attitudes among my research participants, the remainder of this chapter will examine these dynamics more closely in relation to my interest in what forms of action workers have at their disposal in the context of the SAWP.

Collective creation activities such as those detailed above precipitated a number of conversations related to how oftentimes one worker's or one small group's performance of individual acts of micro-resistance or resilience may result in further disadvantaging other workers. Research

participants discussed how uneven forms of worker camaraderie emerged as the result of workplace and dormitory conflicts that often developed between older workers such as the character of foreman as played by Joaquín and younger workers, such as Jaime, the protagonist, played by Mauricio and Enrique. To start, many younger research participants expressed the opinion that workers with more years in the program, many of whom may be perceived to have developed a modicum of trust with the employer, are known to exploit their position of power in a way that further subordinates less experienced workers. To illustrate this opinion it is useful to turn once again to the collection creation workshops. One of these workshop discussions was precipitated by a trust game, a category of drama activities in which some people participate with their eyes closed (Boal 2002, pp. 115-6). Participants formed groups of two and in their pairs decided on a group sound. Once the sound was decided, one member of each pair was instructed to close their eyes. On my instructions, the partner with their eyes open began to repeatedly make the agreed-upon sound. Whenever the sound was made, the partner with their eyes closed was instructed to follow the sound. The leader was able to move around the room and to be as close or as far away from their partner as they so desired. After a while of leading and following, the leaders were asked to find a spot in the room as far away from their partners as possible, where they were asked to stand still and make their sound until they were reunited with their partner, who had to walk the length of the room with their eyes closed. Once the partners were reunited, they switched roles and did it again.

After the exercise was completed, I asked the participants to comment on the game, in particular if any aspects of the exercise reminded them of any experiences they may have had in their roles as migrant farm workers. One worker (Ignacio) responded that the exercise reminded him of his first day working on a farm in Canada, 20 years earlier. Ignacio talked about how following a random sound with his eyes closed felt similar to his first days as a migrant farm worker. He talked about how in those days he “knew nothing” and had to rely on his fellow co-workers to learn about his new job. The game reminded him of how his older and more experienced co-workers were not always very helpful. Ignacio felt that these workers would sometimes withhold important information on purpose. Other participants agreed that the game could be experienced in this way, and that they had all experienced similar situations. For example, Joaquín shared a detailed story of how his first few months in Canada were stressful on account of harassment from his older and more experienced co-workers. Javier agreed that conflict and competition

between different generations of workers is a problem, but that it is possible to overcome these difficulties through perseverance and integrating yourself in the physical labour. Joaquín stated that if there was one thing that he learned in his 11 years in the SAWP, it was not to trust anyone. For Mauricio, who was in his first season on a farm in Canada, these stories were very real and very raw, as he felt he was experiencing this same type of harassment at the time of research. For example, Mauricio, who was speaking quickly, emphatically and with a raised voice, talked about how more experienced workers sometimes seemed to manipulate their working bodies in such a way as to make it look as though they are working hard and fast, though he noticed that they just seem to be moving quickly through the rows, yet leaving a lot of fruit behind. He said: “There are old co-workers who have been in the program for 15 years and they go ahead of you but they leave everything really filthy, they do really lousy work, but there they go ahead of everyone.” The older workshop participants agreed that it does not take long for workers to assess how to make their jobs easier while simultaneously making it appear as though they are being productive. Workshop participants commented on how the workplace is a safer place for more experienced workers because the employer is paying less attention to them as it is assumed they know what they are doing. Interestingly, this is somewhat in contrast to Sawchuk and Kempf’s (2008, 2009) examination of how generational conflict can arise between SAWP workers. In their research, they found that SAWP workers will complain of newer workers working fast in order to reap supervisory approval. My data suggests that the generational conflict runs deeper than Sawchuk and Kempf are suggesting. In response to a fear that younger workers may indeed jeopardize their ability to earn a living, older workers find ways of wielding their own power in the workplace, and develop a structured ritual to which younger workers are excluded.

The group talked in detail about how this type of individualized action can benefit particular workers, while at the same time doing harm to the collective, or more specifically the younger workers with less experience. Participants discussed how younger, less experienced workers would often get blamed for these intentional acts of everyday resistance on account of their inexperience, and those responsible would often let the blame settle on newer workers. Mauricio and Javier, who were working in the same greenhouse, talked about how in their workplace, whenever the employer is unhappy with the work, more experienced co-workers, who are frequently responsible, would often blame poor work on the newest workers. Further interviews

with older workers suggest that putting pressure on younger workers may indeed be one objective of workplace resistance among older workers. From the perspective of many older workers, younger workers may be considered a threat to their livelihoods. A quote from one older worker from illustrates this succinctly:

The truth is, and it is not good to say this, but, the workers who have a lot of years [in the program] don't provide a warm welcome to new workers. They always treat them a little differently. They think that they are going to take their jobs away (Jeronimo).

Ignacio explains his position thusly:

Well, look, if I didn't need to come [to Canada], then I just wouldn't come, because for me it is very difficult, because of my age. It is difficult for me. Imagine, I am working with young men who are 25 years old. There is one guy right now that I think is 22. There is no way I am going to beat him at work.

The perspectives provided by older workers suggest that older workers are resisting workplace redundancy in the face of a looming threat of being replaced by a younger and more energetic workforce. There is a sense from workshop participants that by treating younger workers poorly, older workers are attempting to maintain a modicum of control in a situation over which they have little power to affect change in any other way.

Participants discussed how this and similar scenarios contribute to a culture of workplace conditioning in which younger workers are being trained by older workers to be ultra-competitive in the workplace. Both Ignacio and Javier point out that this only serves to increase production and reduce the employers' cost of doing business. They related this phenomenon to how in the past few years, employers seem to be hiring fewer workers while simultaneously demanding an increase in production. In the words of Mauricio:

They [the older workers] can really fuck you over, but in two years I'll be able to make *them* work really hard [traer en chinga]. That's not good. I shouldn't be thinking like that. Because at the end of the day, the one who is winning is the boss. At the end of the day, the work that one does over here, it was done by 15 people; right now it's done by 11 people. For next year there will only be 10. Because, like, it is the fault of

our own egos... This only serves the boss. And it is my own fault [Y es la gotera mía]. Like, I'm submitting my self to the boss. He saves, ah \$80,000 a year. Why? Because I demonstrate that I am such a bigshot. That I've fucked over everyone else.

Both Ignacio and Javier calculated that in his workplace, the race to either keep up or go faster than the fastest and most competitive workers results in the employer getting the equivalent of twelve hours of work completed in only ten. He noted how workers are losing wages and risking their health and safety on account of increased levels of production. In the words of Javier: "The wear and tear on the body is horrific [impresionante]." All of these workshop participants (Ignacio, Javier, Joaquín and Mauricio) placed part of the blame for this increase in pressure on the unwillingness of workers to work together in solidarity in order to resist workplace practices that add to workers' physical and psychological strain.

Interview participants similarly discussed this dynamic. Montenegro for example, talked about how workers who have been promoted to foreman take advantage of their position in order to impress their employers. He described how from his point of view, older more experienced SAWP workers sometimes will be particularly harsh to their co-workers in order to get noticed. Of this he said: "They want to get on well with the boss, so they exploit people." Mauricio provided some particularly emotional testimony on this topic. He talked about how on his farm, older workers seem to have "more power", and will employ it to the disadvantage of less experienced workers. He talked about one co-worker in particular thusly: "when he is angry with someone from his bunkhouse, to get revenge he will work hard, hard, hard. He goes fierce at work so that he finishes first so that he is seen as the best or most capable [el mas fregón]." He continued by discussing the consequences of this in the following quote:

Whenever someone decides to work hard, then everyone has to work hard, because when the boss comes to check the work and sees that someone is going faster than everyone else... what happens is that we all start to think that we are of no value, that the one who goes fast has more power than us, like that is what the employers will think. So what we will try to do is to work at the same pace as him, so that the boss doesn't think the rest of us are no good.

Similarly, Javier discussed how the desire to impress the boss can often supersede worker solidarity. He said:

Like when a worker wants the boss to think he is the best, well, he works faster, right? He works faster, and for the other workers they are really pushing hard because they are working faster than normal. Work that should take 30 minutes will be done in 15 or 20. That is working 100 per cent harder, or double what you should be working.

Hernan also talked about the perceived power discrepancy between more and less experienced workers, and how this exacerbates an already difficult situation. In his words: “In my case, because I’m new, they always talk bad about my work. They think that because they are more experienced, they are better than us.” Lauro, for example talked about how more experienced workers would make fun of him for working slowly.

Many older research participants, for their part, expressed fear that younger workers “are going to take our jobs away” (Jeronimo), and as another older worker opined: “at our age it is difficult to find work. They just don’t want to hire you” (Emiliano). A good example of older more experienced workers feeling threatened by younger and less experienced workers is provided by Joaquín, who had been promoted to foreman in his workplace. He described how his role in the greenhouse generated a great deal of animosity between him and his co-workers on account of his comparatively higher levels of responsibility in the workplace. Joaquín described how one co-worker in particular filed a report against him to officials at the Ministry of Labour in Mexico City about his perceived “selfishness”, in particular that Joaquín was receiving “favours from the employer and abusing his authority on the farm” (Joaquín). Joaquín was told by the attending Ministry of Labour official on his return to Mexico that his co-worker described him as a “vengeful, aggressive, and violent person.” The general perception among research participants was that having a report filed against a worker with the Ministry of Labour by a co-worker exposes the worker against whom the complaint was made to retribution from state officials, regardless of the truthfulness of any given report’s content. Participants were of the opinion that while in Canada government officials in sending countries expected them to do their jobs and to otherwise remain invisible. Research participants discussed how Ministry of Labour officials

may come to perceive a worker who has had a report filed against him or her as a potential troublemaker. Ministry reports against workers by other workers were often talked about as a convenient method for a worker to indirectly yet intentionally damage a co-workers' reputation and as a result jeopardize their position in the program. According to research participants, ministry officials have the reputation of making such decisions without fully investigating the particular circumstances in which the report may have been filed. Indeed, in the case of Joaquín, the Ministry of Labour official who received the report decided to punish him on the spot with one year's suspension from the program without any investigation into the content of the report. Joaquín was only allowed back into the program when his employer intervened directly with the Ministry of Labour on his behalf.

Other older workers, such as Consuela who had been in the program for 18 years, and had lived in the same bunkhouse over an 11-year period, described the experience of living and working with her SAWP co-workers as a type of "arranged marriage", thus suggesting one particular gender dynamic that may develop over time. This is related to the effect that a long-term same sex union can have on workers in a context of hyper-masculinity. She said that over time, workers get to know each other and learn to live together comfortably. Consuela's description of bunkhouse living as a marriage was particularly underscored in a joint interview I conducted with two older SAWP workers from Mexico: Emilio (age, 61; 27 seasons) and Celso (age 62; 26 seasons). This interview was conducted in the small bunkhouse bedroom that Emilio and Celso had shared for over two decades. Each of them sat on the side of their own twin bed during the interview. In between these two beds was a small coffee table, half of which was reserved for Emilio and the other half for Celso. The room was very tidy and orderly. Both of these workers insisted on doing the interview together in this room, where they could speak their mind away from the prying ears of their fellow co-workers. It was clear that in some unspoken way, this room was a refuge from the performance of hyper-masculinity in the larger group and workplace. Celso and Emilio, it seemed to me, had long come to terms with their 'forced marriage' – and in their own way, had made it work. In their interview, they talked about how over the years they developed bunkhouse and workplace norms that support workers' individual needs. They provided the example of how they made it a habit of turning up the volume on the television whenever a co-worker was talking on the phone, so as to provide each worker with a bit of privacy. Generally, this was a situation that Emilio described as "well organized." In the words

of Celso: “here, there are no problems.” They talked about how when newer untested workers arrive, they may cause problems, but that for the most part an acceptable balance is attained over time. Generally speaking, older workers such as Celso, Consuela, Emilio, Ignacio, Joaquín and Lourdes talked about how major problems only arose when new workers arrived and upset the delicate balance that they worked so hard to develop over many years of communal adaptation. For younger workers, this balance was often interpreted as a clannish tradition which was potentially harmful to the long-term wellbeing of SAWP workers, as more satisfied workers were often criticized for adapting to problems rather than resisting them. In the words of Mauricio, who in this quote is referring to older workers who perceive younger workers as particularly problematic:

I would like to have a shell like they have, because that’s what it is – a shell. They are shameless [son conchudos]. They have a shell like a turtle, and when the stones and everything start to hit [cuando vienen las pedradas y todo] they just put themselves inside their shells. They trap themselves in their shells and the world outside just turns. And when all the stones stop, that’s when they come out of their shells. You know, I would like to have a little shell so that I can avoid all my problems.

As such, what for younger workers was experienced as complacency or in some cases as a series of aggressive tactics designed to shore up power in the workplace is seen by older workers as part and parcel of the collective strategy of shear survival within the program. For more experienced workers, integrating new workers into the program at the level of the workplace and the bunkhouse entails the risk of upsetting the finely tuned balance of mutual understanding that has developed between co-workers who have lived and worked together in some cases for decades.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed my kinesthetic approach to exploring workers’ own experiences of survival in the context of control and surveillance at work and in the bunkhouse. Starting with an examination of how workers employ their body in the service of survival in the intimate microspheres of everyday life, I was able to demonstrate a paradox associated with the established, if

not largely unspoken norms of worker survival in the program. For many workers, learning to survive means learning to develop both individual and collective strategies for performing accepted forms of social interaction while in Canada. Put simply, in this chapter I have revealed how tacitly accepted group rituals that support workers' collective adaptation clash with attitudes and practices held by newer workers who have not yet been fully integrated into SAWP culture. This results in a dialectical performance of rejection and integration between younger and older workers that can stifle opportunities for building group solidarity and trust. This paradox represents a clash between individual forms of worker agency on the one hand, such as the desire to speak out about exploitative practices and the dramaturgical and collective performance of workplace and societal norms on the other. New workers enter the SAWP with the expectation that more experienced fellow compatriots will lend a helping hand. Instead, many workers are confronted with a common set of 'stage directions' to which they have not been introduced. In order to be accepted into the team and not offend the bonds of familiarity among older workers newer workers must learn the accepted rules of social interaction. Until then, younger workers feel singled out – the targets of suspicion and gossip in both the workplace and the bunkhouse. In the context of the SAWP, especially among Mexican and Guatemalan workers, with whom I had the most contact, this takes the form of a collective *relajo*, the communal suspension of workers' legitimate demands for a more humane working and living situation. In stark terms, this represents the attempted repudiation of workers' sincerest motivations to experiment with subject positions other than that of deferential migrant worker. These findings are in contrast to previous research that has found that communal forms of living do indeed engender worker solidarities, such as Smith & Pun's (2006) recent observations on the development of collective resistance strategies among worker dormitory dwellers in Chinese Special Economic Zones.

All this notwithstanding, many of my research participants' experiences with acts of resistance do indeed demonstrate workers' desires to move toward freedom from prescribed ways of being in the face of particularly tough living and working conditions. As such, the particular form of social interaction described in this chapter should not be understood to be entirely impervious to individual challenges. In the final chapter I provide a reflection on the possibility of finding the space to explore different kinds of social interactive performances not embedded in prescribed notions of what it means to be a migrant worker in Canada. In the following pages I examine the social and political implications of individual workers seeking out a refuge from

bunkhouse/workplace problems in their free time. Using workers' own experiences, I will explore the effects of socializing in town during leisure hours, learning English in their off time and most intriguingly, their overt participation in artistic exploration through their participation in this project. I argue that free time, however limited, offers workers the opportunity to express their individuality in ways that may challenge both the tacitly agreed upon rituals of survival and the prescribed ways of being inherent to policies and practices associated with the SAWP.

## **Chapter 8: From the Street to the Stage: Workers' Experiences of Free Time and the Politics of Artistic Creation**

In this chapter I put forward the position that workers' participation in non-work related activities during leisure hours, such as learning English or engaging in community events may produce a small breach in the accepted norms of control, and subsequently a rich opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue. During my fieldwork I asked research participants directly about their conceptions of freedom, and where, when and indeed *if*, they ever felt 'free' as migrant workers in Canada. As I have elucidated in detail in the previous chapters, the general sense among the majority of respondents was that they did not feel 'free' while they were in Canada, especially compared to their lives in their home countries. The previously discussed themes of confinement and 'slave work' are good examples of this experiential territory. That notwithstanding, workers' perceptions of how they wield control over the small, seemingly insignificant daily aspects of their lives leaves the door open for examining in more detail this notion of feeling 'free'. Given workers' cramped and heavily surveilled bunkhouse arrangements, what perceptions of 'feeling free' that workers did speak to were most notably felt during what little leisure time was available to them. Many research participants carefully considered the ways in which they spent their spare time, and many claimed to have used this time by seeking out sanctuary outside of the bunkhouse. This chapter examines how workers' every day and individual forms of seeking refuge outside of the living-at-work arrangement may offer some insights into the everyday subversions of what is considered acceptable conduct for a 'migrant worker'. In order to provide a more in-depth examination of the political significance of free time in the context of Canada's SAWP, throughout this chapter I provide an analysis of two reports conducted by a consultancy group on behalf of the Municipality of Leamington (The Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2011, 2012). These reports were commissioned by the Municipality as a preliminary study of how to best proceed with the rejuvenation of the city's downtown area. Below I discuss parts of the reports that deal specifically with the analysis of migrant workers' use of downtown and the subsequent recommendations to the Municipality of how to manage and control the increasing numbers of migrant workers in that part of the city. I will attempt to show that in this specific political context, workers' active engagement with peripheral activities that experiment with ways of being that run contrary to those established by the policies and practices associated with the SAWP may come to symbolize a fissure through

which new subjectivities may emerge. In particular, this chapter will provide a reflection on how workers' participation in *this project* may represent an intriguing disruption of prescribed subject positions and offer a thought-provoking intervention into workers' own perceptions of what is possible.

### **Finding Freedom “in the Street”: The Perceived ‘Problem’ of the Migrant Flâneur**

In 2011, a report was generated by a consultant firm hired by the Municipality of Leamington to assess the city's options with regards to revitalizing the downtown area (known locally as ‘Uptown’) (The Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2011). In this report, the group discussed their findings from a survey on residents' perceptions and use of the ‘Uptown’ area. In their 2011 discussion paper and subsequent 2012 final report, migrant workers ‘loitering’ downtown were presented as a ‘problem’ that needed to be fixed (Sacheli, 2012). The ‘problem’ of migrant workers occupying the Uptown area came to a head in 2013 when then Leamington Mayor John Paterson claimed that a migrant worker made a comment to his daughter regarding her appearance (Boesveld, 2013). In response to this alleged incident Mayor Paterson asked the local Ontario Provincial Police services board to address the “sexual” and “aggressive tendencies” of migrant workers employed in the town's greenhouse industry (Boesveld, 2013), specifically those migrant workers from the Caribbean. In the words of Mayor Paterson: “Not to be bigoted, not to be racist, not to be anything, it is directly related to some of the Jamaican migrant workers that are here” (as cited in CBC News, 2013). The issue of Leamington's migrant workers hanging out downtown during their time off, according to Mayor Paterson, resulted in Leamington residents (women in particular) avoiding the area entirely, “especially on weekends when the workers are more likely to be cashing their cheques, doing laundry and shopping for groceries” (Boesveld, 2013). Indeed, this very observation was expressed in the final 2012 downtown revitalization report developed by The Jones Consulting Group (2012). In their report they claimed that there was a perception among residents that the downtown area was unsafe. They said: “Through our stakeholder consultations, it became known that residents in the area perceive the Uptown as unsafe in the evening hours, due to the crowds of people loitering outside of stores” (p. 7). The portrayal of Leamington's downtown as unsafe as a result of “too many ethnicities” and “unsavoury” people loitering on the street during evenings and on weekends together with the well-publicized views of Mayor Paterson correspond to findings from previous research conducted by Bauder (2008). In his work, Bauder attempts to reveal

popular attitudes towards migrant workers through a detailed examination of media representations of SAWP workers in Southern Ontario newspapers between 1997 and 2002. Bauder found that one primary narrative in which migrant workers were typically portrayed in local media was as a group of social delinquents within the communities where they lived. In other words, the recent portrayals of Leamington SAWP workers as a problem fits neatly into the established representation of workers as not worthy of community inclusion due to their “inherent potential for criminal or dangerous behaviour” (Perry, 2012b, p. 198).

In 2012, the consulting group made some recommendations to city council meant to address the perceived problem of migrant workers plaguing the downtown, making the area uninviting for residents and obstructive to development. This presents a paradox: lauding masculinity in the workplace while fearing it in the street. Some of these recommendations included developing an “educational package” designed to instruct “ethnic business owners” on “North American ways to operate their businesses” (The Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2012, p. 52) and promoting activities to “celebrate the diversity of the area”, for example promoting the creation and sale of “ethnic art and crafts” (p. 53). Their main idea was the development of a “Multicultural Friendship Centre” that “could be for all ethnic communities that are present in Uptown” (p. 53). They envisioned an establishment that celebrated “diversity” and encouraged “socializing among different ethnic groups” (p. 53). The consulting group suggested that the Municipality encourage greenhouse owners to “participate in the development of the Multicultural Friendship Centre as well as the initiation of recreational and cultural clubs that will help provide the migrant workers with opportunities to engage in social activities” (p. 53). In the end, the consulting group, along with “a committee of town and community representatives” put forward the suggestion that \$50,000 be put toward “the creation of a friendship centre where migrant workers can meet, play dominoes, or cards, make crafts and sell their handiwork”(Sacheli, 2012). Needless to say, migrant workers themselves were never consulted. Indeed, migrant workers were never considered a legitimate ‘stakeholder’ in the revitalization of the downtown. Rather, those migrant workers who *do* use the downtown area, presumably for its intended purposes as a commercial and cultural district, were portrayed as threats to the personal safety of ‘legitimate’ residents and as bothersome hurdles to progress and urban renewal. The debate concerning the use of Uptown by migrant workers on evenings and weekends is strikingly similar to public debates in the early 1990s in Hong Kong which were spurred by complaints that Filipina domestic workers were

“taking over” the city’s Central District (Constable, 2007, pp. 1-8). These debates were colloquially referred to as ‘The Battle for Charter Road’, in reference to workers’ practises of congregating in the posh pedestrian thoroughfare of that name on Sunday afternoons. The focus was on complaints from locals that workers’ use of the area was preventing other more legitimate “classes” of people from using it – such as tourists and “local Chinese” (p. 5-6). In a report addressing the issue, the district’s largest landowner, Hongkong Land, suggested that Charter Road be reopened to traffic on Sundays in an effort to prevent workers from congregating in public. In their report, Hongkong Land suggested that underground car parks be offered as gathering places for domestic workers on their days off, ensuring that workers would not “disturb the neighbourhood” (p. 7).

These depictions of migrant workers as public disturbances and as threats to public safety reveal a political environment both locally and globally that is antagonistic toward migrant workers spending their free time in public. In Leamington, this is the political milieu within which my research participants discussed their feelings of being free and of seeking out a refuge outside of work and outside of the bunkhouse. This local political context provides a clear depiction of how migrant workers are perceived as well as a clearer understanding of whose civic participation is considered legitimate in areas with high numbers of migrant workers, as is the case with Leamington. As is documented in the Jones Report, residents perceive migrant bodies on the streets of their town not only as unpleasant and inconvenient, but also as downright dangerous – to the point that these bodies must be physically relocated and put under constant surveillance in the name of community safety. If nothing else, what this report and the mayor’s comments make abundantly clear is that *how* and *where* workers decide to spend their leisure time has political significance. A discussion of this context serves as an important backdrop for an exploration of workers’ own perceptions of their free time. In particular, it serves to frame how workers’ decisions to occupy their free time may contribute, even unwittingly, to a disruption of accepted and acceptable subject positions. In this particular social and political environment, workers’ everyday practices of mingling ‘Uptown’ seem surprisingly subversive.

On any given evening in the summer and particularly on any given Sunday afternoon you will find groups of migrant workers milling about in Leamington’s ‘Uptown’. For example, on Saturday nights in July and August local pubs are busy with workers coming to town to have fun

and to socialize. Along Talbot Street the melodies from Mexican *rancheras* compete for workers' attentions against the beats of Jamaican dance hall. On Sunday afternoons it is not unusual to find workers huddled around the community fountain outside the library downtown, taking advantage of free Wi-Fi to connect with their families over Skype on their laptops. Other workers may be out having lunch at one of many small establishments that cater to workers while many other workers may be found sitting and socializing on the park benches located at the town's main intersection: Erie and Talbot. Eliseo (Age 35; 9 seasons) described getting together with workers outside of work as a way to make friends and "distract the mind – to forget work for a little while." He went on to say, "we really like going to town, to distract ourselves more than anything. Because for six days we just go from the bunkhouse to work and from work to the bunkhouse." Workers discussed these excursions from the bunkhouse as an essential survival tactic – a fundamental means of achieving a degree of balance and well-being. In the words of Mauricio: "When do I feel most free in Canada? In the street, or in the park. That is where we feel most free." In Hong Kong, workers responded to political pressures to vacate Charter Road by continuing to gather on the street on Sundays in the thousands, "laughing, taking, and eating en masse. They demanded to be seen and refused to be moved" (Constable, 2007, pp. 7-8). It must be recognized that SAWP workers in Leamington today may not be as collectively organized as Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong 25 years ago. That notwithstanding, attempting to gain freedom through spending time and congregating "in the street" may be seen as a modest, if not unwitting political and indeed embodied intervention against the exclusion of workers from civic life. In Leamington, the street becomes a site of destabilization, the collective use of which is an affront of the Municipality's vision of a town where migrant workers are separated from the general population.

The solutions offered to the perceived problem of migrant workers provide a striking example of both bio-power (Foucault, 1978, 1997/2003) and stranger fetishism (Ahmed, 2000), as discussed in previous chapters. In the case of the Multicultural Friendship Centre the amalgamation of both the inclusion and exclusion of a community's 'others' is evident in the following two ways. First, according to the proposal, workers' bodies would be disallowed, or at least discouraged, from occupying the downtown area in the name 'security', a crucial narrative for vindicating the control of "the random element" of a given population "so as to optimize a state of life" for more the rightful members of the community (Foucault, 1997/2003, p. 246). Framed as a direct

response to residents' concerns about safety, the elimination of these bodies from the public square would necessarily ensure that life in general become healthier for the town's 'legitimate' residents (Foucault, 1997/2003, p. 225). Second, the solution of a centre where migrant workers can go in lieu of socializing in public was provided as a way of celebrating "diversity" and "ethnic" mingling. Couching their proposal in language that promotes the differentiation of migrant workers from the rest of the town's population provided a perverse justification for workers' absolute expulsion from public life. In other words, it is workers' difference as 'ethnic' or 'diverse' that is the very feature that "may be dangerous to the well-being" of Leamington residents (Ahmed, 2000, p. 97). This was made abundantly clear in Mayor Paterson's comments regarding the "aggressive tendencies" of migrant workers on the streets of Leamington (Boesveld, 2013). The proposals reify a form of governmentality that promotes the strict exclusion of migrant farm workers while simultaneously obscuring the production of undesirable racialized bodies by appealing to the socially accepted symbols of 'multiculturalism' and 'friendship'. In this way, city council can both embrace diversity by recognizing difference while simultaneously excluding those who are deemed 'different' from participating in civic life. In a final twist, the consulting group and city council suggested that greenhouse growers take the lead in bringing this proposal to life and in ensuring that workers would indeed go there during their time off. This is a clear example of the Municipality outsourcing institutionally and structurally sanctioned racism from the realm of city council onto the shoulders of individual employers (Goldberg, 2009). Much like the living-at-work arrangement described above, the administration of a Multicultural Friendship Centre would thus transfer the racism associated with excluding racialized bodies from everyday civic life from the public jurisdiction of city hall to the more private realm of the employment relationship.

Engagement with 'the street' is thus a good place to begin to explore workers' experiences and perceptions of finding sanctuary from the workplace/bunkhouse. In the following section, I explore this notion of freedom as refuge further in an examination of a routine common to many of my research participants: attending free English as a Second Language lessons in the evenings and weekends. For many respondents, this was an important way of making friends and developing a community within the SAWP, outside of the limited confines of the living-at-work arrangement. An examination of workers experiences and perceptions of learning English

provide the essential groundwork for my subsequent examination of workers' involvement in collective creation and community dialogue.

### **Finding Refuge in Leisure Time: Friendship, Community and the 'Thrill' of Learning English**

Many respondents talked about finding ways to divert attention away from workplace and bunkhouse problems, such as through physical exercise, fishing in Lake Erie, or even finding a patch of land near the bunkhouse to plant flowers or vegetables for personal consumption. Ignacio and Enrique in particular would play music together on the weekends, and would often be asked to play during local events and parties. Iván, who at the time of my field work was living in his own apartment with his partner and 1-year old son, had decided to give back to the migrant worker community by providing his home to workers as a type of sanctuary, a place where fellow workers could come together and just 'be'. He said: "The people you see coming over, they close to me, they not just close to me because we have fun here, it's because how we help each other." Every weekend throughout my fieldwork, Iván invited me to his home to socialize with him and a constantly revolving door of migrant worker friends of all nationalities, often with workers from different workplaces and bunkhouses and so not in competitive relation with each other. Iván always made sure that his friends were fed and that they always had something to drink. He even purchased a karaoke machine so that he could host parties for his Filipino neighbours and friends who were working as temporary foreign workers in the vegetable packing industry. Iván had a family in Canada, and it was clear that for many workers, socializing at Iván's home supplemented a week of work and isolation with a sense of normalcy, friendship and family connection.

A similar dynamic unfolded for those workers who actively sought out opportunities to be active in their community and to make friends through the few services available to workers, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. As many of my research participants were recruited through my presentations during the free ESL classes offered in the evenings and weekends by Frontier College, it came as no surprise that many of my respondents discussed the importance of learning English in their leisure time. Unlike permanent streams of Canadian immigration, temporary foreign workers in Canada are not entitled to free language instruction, such as the Language Instruction for the Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program funded by

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Nakache, 2013). Industrious SAWP workers thus need to seek out more informal opportunities such as Frontier College's Labourer-Teacher Program, which provided literacy and ESL instruction for migrant farm workers in Ontario. During my fieldwork, Frontier College had an office in Leamington from which the organization administered classes and sent out volunteer instructors to deliver classes in various bunkhouses throughout the area. Research participants discussed both the practical aspects of learning English for communication in the workplace and in the community as well as the social aspects of attending classes, such as communing with fellow workers and mingling with their teachers.

For SAWP workers, learning English can itself be a subversive act. The simple act of learning the local language either out of curiosity, the desire to socialize, or in the interests of daily survival may be seen as a way of subverting power. SAWP screening and recruitment practices overtly exclude skills not associated with a worker's proficiency and expertise in agricultural work. Unlike permanent streams of immigration, communication skills such as the ability to understand and speak English are not considered desirable. Research indicates that the institutional exclusion of such skills from SAWP screening processes have repeatedly endeared Hispanic workers to employers over English-speaking Caribbean workers who have more often demonstrated the ability to directly confront the employer about exploitative working and living conditions (Binford & Preibisch, 2013; Binford, 2002). As such, any discussion of low-skilled temporary foreign workers and their attempts to learn English should not just be limited to discussions about technical knowledge, but rather must be understood as a part of "struggles in the terrain of the politics of identity" (Dunk 1996, 120).

The fact that this is contested terrain was alluded to numerous times throughout my fieldwork. For example, in the play created by my research participants, the general bunkhouse reaction to the protagonist's interest in learning English was portrayed negatively. For the protagonist's co-workers, this endeavour was seen as a superfluous waste of time. His time would have been better spent cleaning the bunkhouse in case the employer conducted a surprise dormitory inspection. Similarly, Iván reminisced about the time that he started to learn English in his first season as an SAWP worker and discussed how having the opportunity to attend classes provided him with a much needed escape from the chaos of the bunkhouse. Other workers, such as Mauricio, Javier and Montenegro also discussed how their participation in English classes was

frowned upon by their co-workers. Montenegro had ESL classes delivered by a Frontier College volunteer in his bunkhouse once a week. He talked about how some of his co-workers would intentionally disrupt the lessons by increasing the volume on the television during class in an attempt to intimidate fellow workers into not attending the sessions. Other respondents discussed how even if they did understand English, it was sometimes better to downplay this skill on the farm, as it could be interpreted as either a symbol of defiance on the part of the employer or as a potential means for manipulating fellow co-workers. Overall, I argue that the act of learning English represents a threat to the established and prescribed subject position of 'worker'. For my research participants in particular, learning English offered a means of exploring a variety of subject positions, most notably that of 'student', 'friend', and even 'teacher'. Workers' actively learning from each other is a key pedagogical dimension of the SAWP program that Sawchuk and Kempf (2008) also examine, though more so in the context of the SAWP workplace. What my analysis adds to this is the suggestion that workers' desire to gain agency through the exploration of freedom in leisure time offers a potential rupture through which workers may relieve stress through friendship outside of the confines of the competitive workplace. The ESL classroom provided workers with an opportunity to explore identities other than those expected in the dormitory and in the workplace. Workers could find comfort in not having to perform a hyper-masculinity in the classroom – and could find a rupture through the habitus of production and express themselves as individuals.

Some respondents discussed the need to learn English in terms of having to communicate on the farm and in town. For these workers, learning English was intimately connected to their desire to feel confident and to be able to defend themselves when needed. Iván, for example, focused on the need to learn English as a way to develop the necessary skills to be able to defend himself against mistreatment while in Canada. He attributed his ability to actively contest bad working environments on his continued interest and indeed success in learning English. Other workers shared Iván's attitude toward English as an indispensable part of a worker's toolkit of defence against exploitation and miscommunication. His opinion overlaps with those of a group of workers I interviewed as a part of a previous research in which I assessed the informal learning of volunteer ESL instructors (Perry, 2013). These anonymous SAWP workers discussed how understanding English in the workplace increased a worker's confidence in the workplace. One worker said: "if you know a little you can defend yourself, and that means that you are more self-

assured.” Similarly Benjamin commented on how having the capacity to speak English could increase one’s sense of independence. He discussed how learning English may in some instances endear you to the boss, and thus make a worker feel more important. On the other hand, warned Benjamin: “for the worker who doesn’t speak English, well, how can he defend himself?” For Jeronimo, the motivation for learning English was grounded in his experience of being sick and not being able to describe his symptoms to the English-speaking doctor. Knowing English meant that he could communicate on his own behalf. Joaquín described how learning English opened doors for him in his workplace. He said: “If you can speak English you can understand what the boss is telling you, and on the other hand you can help the people who don’t speak any English. You can translate for them and help them.” Iván’s main piece of advice that he would give to a new worker just entering the program was to learn English and “not be afraid of it... you gotta feel the thrill of it, and just do it.”

But for many other workers involved in this study, the decision to learn English was about more than just the technical aspect of learning a language for the purposes of communication. For these respondents, attending English classes was about friendship and trust, and about finding one’s way among like-minded individuals in the context of an otherwise hostile environment. Mauricio, who was in his first year in the program during my fieldwork, described his bunkhouse and workplace environment as particularly antagonistic. He was having a difficult time adjusting to his new life as an SAWP worker and found the relationships he was developing in the dormitory/workplace to be particularly toxic. He felt bullied at work and was intent on finding an outlet for his frustrations. Javier, a fellow co-worker, introduced Mauricio to the free ESL classes and they attended class together daily. Mauricio described these classes as an important refuge. He said:

That’s why I go to the school, because over there I feel... like as if it were a refuge, a refuge outside of the bunkhouse – like a refuge from being all day at work. Sometimes we spend days working 11 hours, from 7 to 7 with an hour for lunch, and we just shower and take off on the bicycle to the school. And we feel at ease [a gusto] in the classroom.

Similarly, Ignacio talked passionately about his desire to learn English and placed a lot of importance on the free English classes offered by Frontier College as a motivating factor in his ongoing continuation in the SAWP. He talked enthusiastically about his commitment to learning thusly: “I found the school, and like I need English I said to my wife, I’m going because I want to learn a little English.” Ignacio was committed to coming to class every day, and he discussed how difficult this was given the constraints related to his work in the greenhouse. He said: “sometimes you leave work so tired... so tired that you pay a price. It’s a big price coming here to the school, because you leave exhausted afterwards.” He talked about how he came to class regardless of how tired he was, even in bad weather. He said: “even when it’s snowing and the wind is heavy I grab myself and come to classes on foot.” For Ignacio, the most significant element of attending these classes was the opportunity to make friends outside of work. He talked about how the ESL classroom was a place that, unlike the workplace or the bunkhouse, he was able to make several good friends. For example, he talked about how his friendship with Enrique started during the ESL classes, and developed based on their shared interest in traditional Mexican folk music. For Ignacio, some of these friendships have even spilled over into his life in Mexico. He talked about how sometimes their families will get together at each other’s homes to socialize in the off-seasons. He talked about one good friend in particular (Jeronimo) that he met while attending the ESL classes. He said:

I’m a good friend with him. Why? Because he comes here<sup>xxxii</sup> and we talk, or sometimes we come here together, so I don’t always come alone. It’s better to go with two or three, on the road with bicycles, and I have a good friendship with him, like, I bike with him more because he goes at my pace.

He continued to talk about how other classmates use the ESL classes as a social outlet as well, for example how some of his classmates had previous co-workers from other farms in Ontario or even other provinces and were reunited through the ESL classes in Leamington. Of this he said: “they get together again and like, they make friends.”

My findings suggest that for SAWP workers attending ESL classes can be seen as a unique cultural practice – one that provides workers with an individual and even a small group refuge from the bunkhouse/workplace and contributes towards an overall sense of well-being. On the

one hand workers gain the technical skills and the confidence to communicate at work and in town. Just as importantly, workers' engagement with ESL classes may also be seen as a subversion of the prescribed subject position of 'migrant farm worker'. By having the opportunity to congregate outside of the dormitory, develop trust and experience community, workers who attend classes are able to express themselves in ways that counter this prescribed role. This I argue is a key finding for critical labour education praxis for worker advocates such as Justicia for Migrant Workers who operate in the context of Canada's temporary foreign worker program. Respondents described interactions in this setting as particularly distinct from other aspects of their daily lives in Canada. They talked about things like friendship and learning in ways that displaced these same workers' discussions of more mundane and often antagonistic everyday interactions that occur in the workplace and in the bunkhouse. While workers may not be overtly contesting practices and policies associated with the SAWP through their decisions to partake in ESL classes, the 'thrill' associated with subverting accepted roles through collective learning is in itself politically significant. Respondents developed a sense of safety and freedom – the experience of which may leave “a resistant trace, a stain on the subject, a sight of resistance”, to quote Bhabha (1994, p. 49). At its most fundamental, workers getting together to learn English in their off time is a good example of how SAWP workers are organically engaging with the town of Leamington in their free time. Building community and making friends in this context may provide a window to understanding how the pursuit of pleasure through collective activities in workers' leisure hours may indeed offer the possibility of a rupture in the political landscape. In the following section I return to recommendations from the consultancy report examined above in order to provide further context into how civic participation among migrant workers is perhaps envisioned at the municipal scale. It is in this political context that I explore my research participants' engagement with collective creation through this research project. My findings suggest that aesthetic exploration in a community setting with migrant workers has both emancipatory potential, but may also be seen by workers themselves as an unwelcome interruption to fixed patterns and habits, and to routines that are often understood as key to the survival of the group.

### **Disturbing what is Visible and Sayable through Artistic Expression**

In the pages following the recommendations concerning the Multicultural Friendship Centre, the authors of the consultant group final report to the Municipality of Leamington identify 'public art'

as a key component of improving the downtown area. They describe the creation and display of public art both as a way to beautify the area, but also as a way to increase what they refer to as “community participation” (The Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2012, pp. 55-56). They suggest that \$10,000 be allocated to a public art initiative that would include “murals, sculptures and paintings that showcase local heritage, cultures and industries” (p. 44). The authors attempted to merge civic participation with art, but again failed to consider the inclusion of migrant workers in this initiative. Any artistic endeavours pursued by SAWP workers would be relegated to the production of what the authors described as “arts and crafts” or “handiwork.” These activities would be consigned to the employer and municipally administered Multicultural Friendship Centre. Migrant workers would thus be excluded from what the authors considered to be a worthwhile community-oriented endeavour to create ‘public art’ meant to improve and beautify the city. The authors of this report clearly differentiated art that is participatory and intended for community consumption and the more private practice of craft making they envisioned would occupy migrant workers in their ‘free’ time. The political implications of aesthetic participation in community development is a theme that has recently been explored in scholarly literature (Bishop, 2012; Grundy & Boudreau, 2008). Authors Grundy and Boudreau, for example argue that creativity, particularly in the form of civic engagement in participatory forms of art, is increasingly being harnessed in cultural planning practices at the municipal scale in Canada (Grundy & Boudreau, 2008). The authors depict how these practices, what they refer to as the “regime of creative citizenship” (p. 347), reveal a paradox whereby citizens are portrayed as creative and innovative agents of civic renewal while at the same time as objects of “continual monitoring, assessment and risk-management” (p. 347). These authors argue that these cultural practices expose a form of governmentality in which “creativity and cultural participation are being recast as moral duties of active citizenship” (p. 347). Their analysis sheds light on the recommendations to the Municipality of Leamington as set out in The Jones Report of 2012 (The Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2012). Those urban denizens deemed legitimate are encouraged to become innovative and to take personal responsibility for urban rejuvenation. This, the report suggests, should be expressed through residents’ participation in the artistic creation of public monuments to civic pride. On the other hand, the artistic expression of those city dwellers deemed illegitimate is demoted to the margins of public expression. In other words, the artistic experimentation of migrant farm workers may be effectively monitored in the seemingly

politically benign environment of the Multicultural Friendship Centre. If nothing else, the report is a stark reminder that aesthetic creation cannot be separated from the realm of politics (Bishop, 2012; Jacques Rancière, 2004). The report makes a clear differentiation between the unrestricted and innovative participation of legitimate citizens and the supervised and restricted contribution of migrant farm workers. As such, the report provides a thought-provoking and unexpected backdrop from which to explore the intersections between art, politics and emancipation in the context of the SAWP. In the final section of this chapter I will examine my research participants' engagement with the participatory and collective form of artistic expression incorporated into this research project. Using participant observation and workers' own words, this section proceeds in two parts. First, I examine how a group of workers were able to produce and perform a collective work of art that was able to connect individual memories of oppression and domination to the shared historical memory. Second, I will explore briefly the political implications of workers participating in artistic creation in their free time. Specifically, I explore below audience members' initial responses to play creation among workers as a way of examining workers' various attitudes towards the overt subversion of prescribed ways of being intrinsic to the SAWP.

**Action over Text: Physicalization, Community and the Making of 'El Mero Mole'**

The original idea behind my decision to incorporate collective artistic creation through the use of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed in this research project was grounded in a desire to engage workers in a dialectical process of rehearsal and reflection. This is a process that Quinlan (2011) has recently referred to as a "transformative methodology" (p. 91) in the context of qualitative research with workers in precarious forms of work. I wanted the research arena to be a place where research participants were invited to engage with their experiences in such a way that they could step back and reflect on actions and behaviours that may be rooted in external structures of oppression and domination. I approached this aspect of my research as a way of incorporating a reflection on the ways in which oppression may operate through workers' bodies and how hegemonic ideologies may be imitated out of habit. As such, I approached my qualitative research practice with SAWP workers as a tactic of what Ng refers to as 'decolonizing learning' (Ng, 2011). Theatre has a history of being employed as a site of decolonizing learning, particularly in postcolonial contexts, owing to theatre's capacity to engage people in re-imagining and rearticulating individual and group identities. Within the context of

decolonization, theatre has been depicted as a cultural practice which highlights the primacy of embodied knowledge where intellectual, emotional and spiritual encounters occur physically between bodies, and the enactments and re-enactments of which are fodder for reflection, dialogue, the articulation of counter-discursive identities and the rehearsal of strategies for social transformation (Amkpa, 2006). In examining several folk theatrical performances by women in Northern India, feminist geographer Richa Nagar (2002) examines the intersections between performance and political struggle by interrogating how women actors transgress traditional binaries of masculine/feminine and public/private. She finds that engaging in artistic creation and performance can break boundaries and open up “multiple publics” in which people can attempt to reconfigure the terms of their socio-political identities and positions (p. 55). Broyles-Gonzales (1994) provides an analysis of political or decolonizing theatrical practices in Latin America and among the Hispanic diaspora in the United States. In her examination of the use of theatre in the Chicano movement of the 1960s in California, she provides a historical perspective of oral cultural practices and resistance in both Mexican and Chicano contexts and reveals a strong linkage between performance and resistance for working class Mexicans. In her words, the Mexican popular performance tradition has “throughout history served as a counterhegemonic tool of the disenfranchised and oppressed” (Broyles-Gonzales, 1994, p. 7). This background thus provides a strong foundation for engaging SAWP workers in a decolonizing approach to learning and research that incorporates theatre.

Engaging SAWP workers in collective creation was primarily a physical process of meaning making that incorporated cultural production and performance grounded in movement and the spoken word. Play-creation as qualitative research was an attempt to involve workers more actively in knowledge production. This was meant to be a means toward re-humanizing the research moment, and a tactic for bridging social scholarship and workers’ experiences through play and group discussions. As I described in my methodology chapter, this phase of my research was grounded in the process of the Theatre of the Oppressed. This process was equally inspired by the work of Teatro Campesino, a theatre troupe composed of Latino farm workers that was founded in 1965 during the Delano California Grape Strike of Cesar Chavez’s United Farmworkers Union. During this time, Teatro Campesino became well known for creating and performing short plays for workers “on flat bed trucks and in union halls” (El Teatro Campesino,

2014, Mission and History). These plays were collectively created and grounded in Mexican oral and performance traditions. In the words of Broyles-Gonzales (1994):

... even after the process of improvisation, discussion, and memorization, the performance flowed from an agreed-on general scenario and not from verbatim memorization of a fixed script. Dialogue was not rigidly finalized but subject to further change and improvisation during the course of a performance... the entire body is at all times fully involved in the production of meaning – often producing even more meaning than any words uttered, and many times to the exclusion of words” (p. 17).

Similar to the work of Teatro Campesino, the collective creation phase of this project attempted to access research participants’ self-knowledge through memory and the body. As opposed to conversations with individual workers in one-on-one interviews, the process of play making and improvisation was intended to access the collective “long-term historical memory and physical knowledge of... social relations of oppression and resistance” (p. 20). Broyles-Gonzales argues that memory, body and community converge in performance, and is connected to oral cultural practices which are “constituted directly within the lifeworld community context of *human action*” (Broyles-Gonzales, 1994, p. 24). To build on these ideas, Furniss’ (2004) work on cultural production and the spoken word serves to emphasize the connection between the performative event and the creation of knowledge. He says: “Creativity and spontaneity of the moment building upon the power of the unexpected may lead to the creation of new perceptions and understandings in the listener/audience” (p. 2). He describes the performative event as:

The assemblage of people in real time that was the locus of articulation and perception in which notions of a group were constituted and identities forged, through the ways in which the speaker addresses the audience, through the co-presence of individuals, through common reactions commonly perceived. (p. 3)

He goes on to say:

Intimately woven into the event are a range of other processes – creating knowledge, articulating values, and moving such ideas and information from the

private sphere into the public with all of the implications that can have for relations between people and groups. (p. 3)

With these ideas concerning how play, performance, improvisation and the body are connected to memory, community and collective self-knowledge, the remainder of this subsection will engage with research participants' own reflections of how this aspect of the research process was able to engage workers on this level.

It is important to note that while not all collective creation participants were actively involved in learning English at the time of my research, all participants had been or were engaged with the Frontier College ESL classroom at some point. As such, all collective creation participants had some experience of making friends and building community outside of the bunkhouse and the workplace. That notwithstanding, this by no means implies that these participants were in any way actively involved in community organizing, as none of them identified as a community activist as such. All collective creation participants, however, expressed an interest in trying new things and being actively involved in their community. Workers' reflections on collective creation in the context of this research must therefore be understood in this broader context. For example, in a follow-up interview that I conducted with him after the performance, Enrique expressed his motivation for joining the group in the following way:

I liked the idea of being in a play about Mexicans. I really liked it and always I wanted to participate in something like this. Well, when you invited me it got me excited and gave me a lot of energy...

Likewise, Joaquín expressed his interest in exploring the possibilities of community dialogue with his fellow SAWP workers thusly: "It's important because the play expresses the situations that we are living as migrant workers." Mauricio was equally interested in finding new and different ways of expressing his thoughts and feelings about his experiences in the SAWP program and in sharing these collectively. As a trained Mexican folkloric dancer, Mauricio was keen to explore the lived experiences of workers on the stage – the creation of which he dubbed 'el mero mole' – or 'the real deal', in reference to his impression of how realistic and powerful the scenarios were that they were creating and performing. Respondents discussed openly how

participating in the collective creation workshops sparked individual memories of their lives in the program in such a way that could effectively merge these with the collective memory of the group. This was particularly true for Enrique, who played the role of the protagonist. Portraying the trajectory of a rookie worker for an audience of peers had a particularly strong personal impact as, in his words: “I remembered when I came into the program and it was almost the same as what happened to me.” Connecting the individual memory of work and migration to the collective memory of exploitation may thus have facilitated a more “critical... dialectical conceptualization” of the SAWP experience (Allman, 1999, p. 115).

Over the course of these workshops, I witnessed workers playing and laughing together and actively manipulating their bodies in the act of collectively grounded artistic experimentation. The following description of one activity in particular is particularly illustrative of how collective creation could provide the catalyst for a collaborative and embodied method of meaning-making. In one workshop I employed Boal’s technique of ‘sculpting’ in which participants placed their own bodies and the bodies of fellow workers into an image that was meant to represent the pressure to be productive at work (Boal, 2002, pp. 136-138). The participants created a static image, or tableau, of the employer entering the immediate workspace of three workers during a routine inspection of the greenhouse. Once the image was created, I asked each participant to reflect on and articulate his emotional responses to the image at the moment it was meant to be taking place – from the point of view of the characters they had created. Participants’ responses ranged from ‘nervous’ to ‘confident’, and were largely associated with the individual participant’s level of experience in the SAWP. The participant who was newest to the SAWP felt the most nervous and from there the confidence level rose along with a worker’s years of experience in the program. I then asked Ignacio, who was playing the boss, what his character desired most in this moment. In character, Ignacio responded that he simply wanted his workers to work faster. When I asked him what he would say to his workers in this situation, he responded that he would not say anything, and added that he did not have to, as his very presence in the vicinity of his workers would ensure their productivity. This response sparked vigorous head nodding from Javier, Joaquín, and Mauricio, which led to an immediate and emotional group discussion around tactics of control practiced by SAWP employers. Indeed, on numerous occasions throughout the collective creation process research participants would pause the workshop activities in order to discuss in more detail the topic at hand. Often these

discussions were not facilitated by me, but developed organically out of insights derived from participating in the theatrical games and activities and through the creation of dramatic scenarios.

The collective creation process was a way of attempting to capture something ambiguous, what Furniss (2004) refers to as “the magic of the moment, the combination, in the same moment, of the articulation of the utterance... and the feelings in me that accompany, and are embedded in, the moment” (p. 21). This was attempted through workers’ physicalization of ideas and experiences. Interestingly, this process went against the grain of workers’ expectations when agreeing to take part in the creation of a play. Participants claimed to have expected that they would be given a script and detailed instructions of what to do on the stage. In other words, participants did not expect to be so actively involved in artistic creation and experimentation. In the words of Joaquín:

I didn’t think that we would create theatre, I thought that you would tell us exactly what to say, what to do... that you would give me an exclusive character and a theme and that you would tell me that I would play and that I would say this and this. That is what I thought.

Excluding the production of a written script, however, meant that I was able to engage more directly with workers’ lived experiences. Engaging workers’ bodies in the exploration of the collective experience of control and discipline facilitated a critical examination of the SAWP among workers themselves, offering a challenge to the way that power is normally orchestrated in the program (hooks, 1994, pp. 135-137). This was clear from the responses of those workers who participated in the creation and performance of the play. For example, Enrique expressed how he felt empowered through sharing his ideas and his performance with fellow workers. He said: “I liked it because all my friends who were there told me ‘you played a good role, you were well spoken’. I like that... that part I really liked.” This was equally evident during the final performance, in which an audience of workers was invited to contribute comments on the play as a whole and on specific aspects of the scenarios presented. The following remarks were typical of the audience’s reaction:

You have to live what we live in your own body to know what we feel. The play more than anything provides a reflection on what it is we are living through here

in Canada as workers... on what we are *really* living through” (Audience member 1).<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Topics such as employer and state surveillance, workplace harassment among co-workers and the ways in which immigration and labour policies are enacted in everyday practices were thoroughly fleshed out by my research participants during these play-making sessions and by audience members during the final performance. The research arena became a site for discovering, articulating and questioning workers’ experiences of participating in Canada’s SAWP by workers and for workers.

### **Disrupting the Political Lay of the Land: The Risk and Value of Making Art**

It should be clear from previous chapters that the epistemological dimension of engaging workers in an embodied reflection of their experiences in the SAWP has remained at the core of my research. That notwithstanding, over the course of my fieldwork, I became increasingly attentive to the ontological significance of the artistic creation phase of my work. Specifically, I began to wonder to what extent artistic experimentation among SAWP workers who engaged with my project was a value in and of itself, in addition to or even as opposed to the more concrete and visible social and research outcomes (Bishop, 2012). This question arose primarily in response to my observations that workers themselves were not approaching play creation from a purely utilitarian standpoint. Workers’ interest in engaging with creative performance did indeed include an overt interest in the collective examination of the experience of being an SAWP worker. However, my observations of workers’ engagement with artistic creation also revealed aspects of the research process that could be described as more ambiguous, yet equally significant. Specifically, I will examine how research participants’ decisions to spend their leisure time producing a collectively created work of art could be understood as not just a means of producing knowledge, but also as a daring endeavour, regardless of the social and research outcomes. In other words, the use of theatre in action research with SAWP workers meant that “unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity” became crucial elements of workers’ engagement with this project (Bishop, 2012, p. 25). This could be seen as a potentially destabilizing process given the political context in which workers are excluded from all forms of civic participation apart from manual labour – a critical process that may produce “dissensus about what is sayable and thinkable in the world” (p. 35).

I argue that physically engaging SAWP workers' in the creation of a work of art, especially a work of art that is grounded in the collective experience of the social relations of resistance and domination, is a clear disruption of the prescribed subject position of 'migrant farm worker'. For Bishop (2012), in the context of working with marginalized communities, emancipation, or genuine participation in a work of art may only emerge when people are physically engaged. Investigating a community's memory through physicalization and improvisation is a disruption of the idea first articulated in Plato's *Republic* that only the "middle classes have the leisure time to think and critically reflect" thus reinstating "the prejudice by which working-class activity is restricted to manual labour" (Bishop, 2012, p. 38). The political dimension of the collective creation phase of this project was articulated most clearly in the post-performance discussion that took place with audience members. As discussed above, the general perception from the audience was that the play provided an opportunity to collectively discuss employment and immigration practices that are enacted through the daily interactions experienced by SAWP workers. That workers had decided to come together in their free time and to produce a work of art that reflected the lives and their own experiences and those of their fellow co-workers was also perceived by some audience members to be a potentially dangerous act of subversion. For some audience members, the public presentation of such a work of art would certainly provoke a negative reaction from other key stakeholders, such as employers and government officials. The post-performance discussion became a forum through which workers themselves struggled with the political dimensions of civic engagement and artistic production among marginalized communities in the context of managed labour migration programs in Canada. I argue that what these workers' responses demonstrated was that the creation of the play and its subsequent performance offered "a rupture in the order of things" (Rancière, 2003, p. 219). In other words, workers' participation in both artistic creation and in a critical examination of their daily lives could be understood as a process of subjectification by which the expression of worker subjectivity was not only made evident but was in effect celebrated (Biesta, 2010). As I shall demonstrate below, the play, and in particular workers' responses to the play, provided a unique opportunity to examine workers' various attitudes toward performing subject positions other than those prescribed through attitudes and practices associated with the SAWP.

Among the audience members present, there was undoubtedly a sense that our group was able to harness a universal narrative that exposed policies and practices that contributed to the collective

dehumanization of migrant farm workers in Canada. While audience members largely perceived this to be a useful form of sparking a dialogue among workers, there was simultaneously a disagreement on whether or not this play, or something like it, should be performed in public. It could be said that audience members recognized that the creation and performance of a participatory work of art does indeed disrupt the distribution of accepted subject positions – and as such could carry with it both the promise of emancipation, but also the potential for payback. One audience member expressed this risk thusly:

We have a situation here because, they will say ‘who let them do this?’ The bosses will say, the consulate will say, the Ministry officials will say, ‘who let them do this’. No... that is something... to do it in public? For me, no. The bosses would not like to see this, ya? They would send us all back to Mexico.  
(Audience member 3)

Generally speaking audience members’ opinions could be categorized into either one of two camps. On the one hand, there were audience members who passionately advocated for workers to engage in artistic practice as a way to get migrant workers engaged in community action and advocacy. These workers admitted that there was a risk in doing so, but argued that this was a risk that workers should be willing to take. On the other hand, there was an equally passionate group of audience members who were unwilling to surrender the familiarity of routine to what they argued would surely result in repatriation and suspensions from the program.

The post-performance discussion began by encouraging workers to address the content of the play. During this portion of the conversation, audience members discussed various aspects of the play with the creators and performers. Halfway through the post-performance discussion, however, one audience member (Audience member 2) interrupted the discussion in order to raise the issue of bringing this work of art to a larger and more diverse audience made up of both migrant workers and local Canadians. Addressing the crowd, this audience member made the provocative argument that

[Showing the play in public] would release the burden that we all have, to let it go, to express it. It could be our way to, you could say, rebel against the situation that we are all living: because the other option is to remain silent.

This audience member's interjection became the focus of the remainder of the post-performance discussion. While this audience member was claiming to represent both his own opinions and those of his friends, the majority of those workers present did not share his position. One audience member (Audience member 1), for example, responded that he felt it would be an invasion of privacy to show the play in public, as it dealt with intimate themes and situations that to which only migrant farm workers could relate. He said that he would feel "much more comfortable with an appropriate group of people that understands my situation." Many audience members expressed the position that while they enjoyed the performance, for workers to openly participate in community-based artistic creation and performance is too risky an endeavour. To do so would provoke a confrontation with employers and state officials, and as such they were firmly against the idea. In the words of one audience member (Audience member 6):

It's complicated. If we presented to the public, well I don't know, like what do you think, what would the government from here say, what would the consulate say... like someone said after the play, they'll grab you and ask 'who gave you permission for you to have this idea?'.

In fact, many audience members expressed the view that it would be a bad idea for workers to take part in artistic creation and civic participation because "the Mexican consulate wouldn't like it" (Audience member 4) or because it would shame employers and ministry officials (Audience member 5), resulting in dire consequences for all SAWP workers. One audience member (Audience member 5) provided the example of the NFB production of Min Sook Lee's documentary film *El Contrato* that follows the story of two SAWP workers in Leamington (Lee, 2003). He spoke about how when this documentary was shown on television in the early 2000s it resulted in an intensification of control and surveillance by employers. He felt that during this time he and his co-workers had relinquished an element of power associated with invisibility, what Phelan (1993) refers to as the "power in remaining unmarked" (p. 6). The audience member who made the original interjection stood his ground and accused his fellow workers of cowardice. He said:

Do you have courage or what? I have courage, and for me, I would show this in public because everything is shown – the good and the bad. Think about the

consequences that the play would have. If people could start to see all these things, I don't know how far it would go, but it would create a real commotion.

In the end, the discussion was left unresolved.

This discussion revealed the extent to which SAWP workers feel they must go to maintain a measure of collective invisibility in public. For many workers, there seems to exist a joint and unspoken agreement to remain silent – an arrangement that is seen to provide workers with an element of power within a set of social relations largely defined by marginality, control and discipline. Audience members' responses to the play, and particularly to the suggestion that it should be performed before a diverse audience, showed the care that workers take in their collective performance of deference, and how this performance is perceived as integral to their survival. This was further exposed through follow up interviews with collective creation participants that I conducted after the performance. During this interview I asked participants to reflect on this dispute from the post-performance discussion. Of these participants, Enrique had the most to share. It is interesting that even though Enrique was a key member of the creative team, and indeed played the role of the protagonist in the final performance, he did not agree with the idea of workers creating collective works of art designed for public consumption. He was offended by this audience member's allusion to cowardice and said that anyone who talks about bravery "must not have really lived through the suffering that many workers have lived through." He talked about how this worker must be new to the program as he does not represent the majority opinion of workers, "especially those that have put up with so much for so long." He said:

In that moment I didn't want to talk because, well I didn't want to stretch it out. Because, I think that he hasn't had an experience like many have had. Because many workers have had a lot of experiences, Adam. There are those that have been mistreated. I have worked on various farms where there were very bad employers. There are workers that have not had the opportunity to live well. So when someone talks like that... I think that that person has not had that experience like many have had – there are people who have suffered here in

Canada. But really, I didn't want to respond to him. Because, well... it's all good. Everyone has their opinion.

He told me that there would be no point to performing for a Canadian audience as “they just wouldn't understand.” Indeed, this was an opinion that was shared by other workers as well, such as Lucas, Mauricio, Joaquín and Ignacio. Enrique made the observation that there would be some townsfolk that may be sympathetic. In other words, there would be those who would see “the value in the work of a foreigner who comes here, that we have worked, and struggled to get ahead.” But others he claimed, “are racist and don't care about us – to them we don't matter.”

The collective creation process that was integrated into this research project revealed a contradiction associated with workers' desire to come together as a community as set against the perceived need to remain hidden under a cloak of invisibility. The latter maintained through the collective performance of deference, not only in the bunkhouse and in the workplace, but also in the public domains of the street, the park and the town's private establishments such as restaurants and grocery stores. During this project, research participants came together as a community in order to examine issues relevant to workers as a group through physicality, play and group discussion. The physical act of doing so triggered what Rancière may refer to as a rupture – a modest yet potent gesture toward what is possible as opposed to what just is. In the context of a municipal vision toward ‘public art’ which is both participatory and celebratory of civic pride and which simultaneously excludes the contribution of migrant workers, the subversion of subject positions through play creation and performance managed to spark an emotional dialogue among those workers present. Rather than focusing solely on addressing the everyday issues faced by workers, this conversation emphasized the intrinsic risk associated with the very act of coming together to interchange ideas and experiences.

### **Conclusion**

For SAWP workers, practices of control and surveillance are not limited to the bunkhouse and the workplace. On the contrary, the concern with how to manage the movements of migrant workers outside of the realm of the living-at-work arrangement has been an integral element in Leamington's plans for urban renewal. The proposals to the Municipality discussed in this chapter reveal a preoccupation with how workers spend their free time in town. Workers' very

presence in the downtown area has been portrayed as both as obstructive to plans for urban transformation and as potentially dangerous to the physical well-being of ‘legitimate’ residents. This is the stark political and spatial context in which workers seek out a refuge from the living-at-work arrangement in what little leisure time they have available, normally on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons. In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate how seemingly innocuous leisure pursuits such as hanging out with co-workers in the street or attending group ESL classes may indeed subvert the prescribed subject position of ‘migrant worker’. Research participants’ participation in the collective creation phase of this research project provided a particularly poignant illustration of this. Workers’ participation in aesthetic exploration and performance during their free time offered a potential rupture in the political lay of the land, and consequently a significant opportunity for engaging workers in reflection and dialogue. Migrant farm workers are simply not meant to be making art, especially not on their own terms. In the case of this project, workers created and performed a play that was critical of SAWP policies and practices as they affect the daily lives of workers themselves. Workers’ taking their bodies from the farm to the street and from the street to the stage is portrayed in this chapter as a radical act – one that stirred workers’ emotions and revealed both the emancipatory potential and corresponding risk associated with the creative exploration of migrant worker roles and identity.

## **Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks**

In these last few pages I provide a brief overview of my findings and some final thoughts as to the significance of this research, as well as a review of next steps and a few suggestions for praxis.

### **Bunkhouse Drama: What I Uncovered**

In this thesis, my intention has been to provide a nuanced examination of both migrant farm workers' individual and small group responses to difficult working conditions in Canada's agricultural industry and to reflect on alternative ways of understanding the possibility of developing a program of social and political emancipation in the intimate contexts of workers' daily lives. Through engaging workers in personal narrative, life history and an overt examination of embodied experience and knowledge, I have developed an intimate portrayal about the nature of work and employment within Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, as much from the perspective of workers themselves as I am able to invoke as an outsider. As I have shown, this is a story that is deeply connected to everyday forms of power, control and racism that have their direct lineage in a national history of slavery and indentured servitude, despite Canada's outward embrace of pluralism and multiculturalism. I have traced exactly how these forms of control and surveillance congregate in the SAWP in such a way that produces and reproduces colonial relations in the workplace, thus conjuring traces of a dubious past. The daily recital of these relations exacerbates an already precarious employment relationship defined by the restriction of basic rights to migrant workers, such as those expressed in employment standards and human rights legislation. In other words, the systematic exclusion of migrant workers from mainstream Canadian society is generally expressed through forms of power that serve to tether migrant bodies to specific places and tasks, not to mention employers. I have revealed how this process is experienced by workers themselves, and the effect that this process of confinement has on worker voice and how new migrant subjectivities may develop despite the overwhelming constraints.

Theoretically, I develop a comprehensive framework that best captures the experiences of workers in the intimate spaces they occupy, such as the workplace and the bunkhouse, as well as what public spaces workers may have access to, such as the ESL classroom. With this in mind I have merged a seemingly disparate set of conceptual tools, including the global scholarship on

migrant worker agency (with a particular focus on feminist debates), Erving Goffman's insights on performance, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Jorge Portilla's phenomenological analysis of *relajo* in Mexican culture, and Jacques Rancière's conceptualization of rupture as it applies to his theory of the distribution of the sensible. In applying this framework to my data I demonstrate throughout the thesis that this collection of conceptual tools provides a unique and valuable structure for examining workers' experiences of voice and agency in Canada's SAWP.

In the second half of the dissertation, I provide a detailed account of the findings from my fieldwork which incorporated a mix of semi-structured interviews, collective creation workshops and the final performance of a collectively created play grounded in workers' experiences of navigating the complex power dynamics of the SAWP. These findings were detailed in three chapters, and can be summarized thusly: First, I examine how colonial relations operate in the SAWP by engaging with workers' own experiences of navigating the pressures related to work, confinement, and strained social relations. The chapter explores the consequent effects, both personal and social, that these workplace realities have on workers in their daily lives. My research suggests that everyday life for workers in the SAWP can be a deeply humiliating, dehumanizing and stressful experience. The overall effect is to restrict worker voice by creating an environment in which workers learn to be intensely competitive and to distrust each other as a sheer means of survival. The outcome is a home/workplace context that engenders a deep sense of isolation and individualism among workers. My second finding is directly grounded in the first. My research reveals that individual workers respond to workplace pressures in a variety of ways, from quiet acquiescence to outright opposition. Furthermore, I found that there is a significant generational divide that contributes to workers' decisions to either accommodate difficult conditions or to speak out against them. I likewise found that over time, SAWP workers develop the collective capacity to endure exploitative workplace conditions and substandard and overcrowded housing. I have described this capacity as the development of tacitly accepted group rituals that support worker accommodation and which reject everyday forms of individual and collective resistance. Crucially, these rituals produce a clash of attitudes between older and newer workers that results in what I describe as a dialectical performance of rejection and integration of younger workers that can effectively choke opportunities for building worker solidarity. My third and final finding relates to workers' attempts at finding a refuge from workplace and bunkhouse pressures. In my examination of workers' attempts at building

friendship and community outside of the confines of the bunkhouse/workplace, I developed a particularly innovative way of framing workers' participation in cultural production and artistic creation as an emancipatory and pedagogical endeavor. In examining local attempts to restrict workers' access to the downtown area in their free time, I was able to place workers' experiences of both finding refuge and engaging in action-oriented research in a local political context specific to the town of Leamington. My research reveals that by seeking alternatives to bunkhouse/workplace problems, workers described instances that I have categorized as small breaches in the accepted norms of control, thus producing a potentially important opportunity for engaging workers in critical reflection and dialogue. My work thus contributes to notions of everyday resistance. Specifically, how everyday resistance among SAWP workers may be performed beyond the confines of the workplace and the dormitory, which as I have described are more often than not sites of discord and conflict. While I was able to provide evidence that workers can and do resist oppressive conditions in the workplace and the dormitory – more often than not workers' are made into a highly masculinized producer whose work day is defined by conflict and competition. I argue that this produces a type of group 'production habitus' the walls of which are difficult to crack. My contribution to everyday resistance is more related to workers' resisting such seemingly predetermined subject positions in spaces outside of work, such as the ESL classroom, or in in the case of this research, the drama laboratory. Thus, instead of workers overtly disturbing the labour process, for example, it may be fruitful to understand how by participating in activities outside of work to which they have no business participating – workers may find a way to effectively change the conversation and find ways of developing solidarities. Workers may not have a strong collective way for resisting exploitative workplace conditions, but my research suggests that workers' may have a strong desire to explore new and different identities and as such may be able to resist the very meaning of what it means to be a worker in the search for a peaceful refuge. I additionally found that workers' participation in and subsequent responses to this research project in particular highlighted artistic creation as a potent yet risky way for workers to experiment with alternative subject positions and to nurture a collective and oppositional voice.

### **The Significance to Scholarship**

As this project was guided by two distinct research questions, the scholarly significance of my thesis must be assessed according to both the contribution to an understanding of migrant worker

agency in Canada on the one hand, and to the practice of arts-based methodologies with marginalized communities on the other. On the first point, overall, my work is noteworthy given my focus on developing a scholarly analysis of labour and migrant agency through engaging with workers' own stories of participating in Canada's TFWP. Generally speaking, migrant farm workers in Canada are a largely hidden population. Engaging directly with workers about their everyday lives is a real challenge for both scholars and activists. My focus on workers' experiences of accommodation, opposition, friendship and adversity within what private and intimate environments to which they have access is especially original. In particular, my emphasis on the need to prioritize access to migrant workers' embodied and kinesthetic knowledge provides a unique contribution to the scholarly awareness of the ways in which workers' own actions may shape workers' collective experience of work and migration. This is an integral element to understanding the story of temporary foreign workers in Canada – and it is one that is rarely documented or examined. In other words, my work not only highlights the *consequences* of labour and migration policies and practices on migrant workers themselves, but points towards the limits and possibilities surrounding workers' daily *responses* to these.

With this in mind, my work moves the conversation forward in the following specific ways: Overall it is significant because it firmly places Canada's TFWP within the historical contexts of slavery and indentured servitude. By examining the intimate social relations that develop within the context of the SAWP in particular, I have been able to build a coherent argument around what it means for the Canadian state and agricultural employers to engender colonial relations in the intimate spaces of the workplace and the bunkhouse. By focusing on the dynamics of control and surveillance, my work brings Canada's TFWP into the wider conversation of migrant worker control globally, particularly with regards to the ways in which labour migration policies and practices shape the micro-political dynamics in such a way as to potentially thwart individual opposition and in turn collective resistance. As such, my work contributes an examination of the cultural dynamics (as opposed to the purely political and economic factors) that shape workers' everyday decisions to respond or not respond to inhumane treatment and poor working conditions. My analysis of how worker-to-worker interactions in both intimate and public spaces influence workers' willingness and ability to resist forms of control and domination is one that until now has not been examined in much detail. This is particularly significant considering the well-documented impression, particularly among Canadian employers, that migrant workers' are

above all else docile and easily controlled. A final aspect of my work that is particularly innovative is how, by examining the supposedly mundane activities of workers' everyday lives *outside of the dormitory/workplace*, I have found a novel way of pin-pointing potential fissures and entry points, however indirect, into generating political discussion and dialogue among workers themselves.

With regards to my inquiry into what creative methods would be particularly valuable for documenting and examining the everyday lives of migrant workers, my work can be said to contribute to scholarly research in the following ways: Generally speaking, scholarly attention on the use of artistic practice and the Theatre of the Oppressed in particular, in community organizing and action research has focused primarily on its utility, especially in the service of consciousness-raising. Artistic forms of community engagement such as the Theatre of the Oppressed have been widely praised for their capacity to generate outcomes that impact the social and political realm above all else. This emphasis on social and political efficacy has largely been at the expense of a more nuanced theoretical and empirical discussion on the interlocking relationship between aesthetics, politics and pedagogy. In my work I have attempted to go beyond the discussion of efficacy in order to engage in this more nuanced conversation. As a result, I have been able to tease out some of the epistemological *and* ontological implications of engaging migrant workers in artistic creation while fleshing these out with examples from my fieldwork. In this dissertation I have provided an analysis of collective artistic practice among migrant workers that prioritizes the politics of risk entailed in workers' using their bodies in ways that challenge their restricted yet socially acceptable places and positions. In this way my work reveals some of the complex dimensions of leisure time and the pursuit of freedom in workers' daily lives. This in itself has scholarly significance.

In particular, my work uncovers how approaches to emancipation and liberation that recognize workers' own understandings and experiences of oppression can be effectively employed through artistic engagement. As such, my work contributes to scholarly debates occurring in both the fields of critical pedagogy and action research. My work moves the conversation forward in that I have attempted to show how the use of art, drama in particular, can provide a distinctive access to embodied and tacit knowledge, and thus can serve as a unique epistemological foundation for developing a critical examination of daily life among small groups. Not only is

this significant methodologically speaking, but in my examination of workers' affective responses to artistic practice in this way, my work clearly exposes how the seemingly mundane activity of engaging one's body in this way is an action in and of itself – one that may even be understood to be radical.

### **Next Steps**

Agriculture is not the only industry that relies on the use of temporary foreign workers. Despite some flux in policy at the federal level recently, there are presently many thousands of temporary foreign workers who are currently working in Canada and who are seeking better lives for themselves and their families. Many of these workers work in low-skilled, low-wage jobs in sectors such as hospitality and food processing. During my fieldwork I encountered a number of temporary foreign workers from the Philippines, for example, who were employed in 'low-skilled' jobs in sectors that service the agricultural industry, such as vegetable packing. Despite the formal inability to request permanent residency due to their status as 'low-skilled' temporary foreign workers, these workers were intent on finding a way to stay in Canada permanently and in turn increase their labour mobility. Despite their working in 'low-skilled' and low wage jobs, all of these workers were highly educated in their home countries. For example, during my fieldwork I encountered teachers, nurses and engineers working in a cucumber-packing facility. These particular workers were unhappy with their working conditions in Ontario, and complained about low wages and the inability to move up in their jobs. Through informal contacts and internet research in their free time, these workers decided to try to secure better jobs elsewhere, and perhaps find a way of applying for permanent resident status. For all of these workers the central goal was to find work 'out west' in places such as in Alberta or Manitoba, as they had heard through informal networks that wages were higher there and that there were better opportunities for eventually gaining permanent residency. Despite the challenges, in the years since I conducted my fieldwork, every single one of these workers has made the move to Alberta, though I am presently unsure about what they found when they arrived.

These stories have further piqued my interest in migrant worker agency, and have led to my proposed post-doctoral program of study, which examines how increasing TFW mobility may indicate a shifting dynamic between citizen and non-citizen workers in which the latter come to develop patterns of migration that mimic those of the former. My proposed research will aim to

answer the following questions: a) how and why are TFWs migrating within Canada for work and b) what are the social and political consequences to the changing dynamics of internal labour migration among non-citizen TFWs? In this subsequent research project I will examine the dynamics of internal migration among TFWs in Canada. This project will focus on three primary sites that, I argue, play a leading role in TFW migration from east to west: Montreal, Quebec; Leamington, Ontario; and Brooks, Alberta. I have chosen Montreal because of a recent increase of TFWs who decide to leave Quebec for economic, cultural and linguistic reasons, as reported by migrant advocate groups in Montreal such as the Immigrant Workers Centre (personal communication, 2014). Leamington and Brooks have been chosen based on the fact that the local economy of each is dependent on a single labour-intensive industry that relies on a seemingly flexible and consistent (im)migrant workforce. These industries are, in the case of Leamington, the agricultural greenhouse industry and, in the case of Brooks, the meat processing industry. The purpose of this research will be twofold: to understand why TFWs are motivated to travel westward and to document how workers tackle the complex process of relocation in spite of their holding a precarious legal status specifically designed to restrict worker mobility. My aim with this project is to continue the conversation that I have begun in this thesis by developing a deeper understanding of how agency evolves and is performed by migrant workers outside of the confines of the agricultural industry. In doing so, my intention is to shed light on a human migratory trend that has little precedent in the Canadian context: the internal migration of temporary foreign workers within Canada's borders. With certain notable exceptions, the agency that TFWs wield over their own lives is still poorly understood. In response to this gap in scholarly knowledge, my project will explore how TFWs, by engaging in internal migratory practices, are indeed molding a unique critical response to the structural vulnerabilities associated with non-citizenship as these intersect with the realities of uneven regional development within Canada.

### **Suggestions for Praxis**

I would like to offer a final note on my work and some implications to initiating a participatory-style approach to knowledge production in the context of academic research conducted in and with marginalized communities – such as SAWP workers. In this section I will highlight the importance of engaging with marginalized communities in ways that attempt to breach the historically accepted binary in scholarly research between ‘us’ and ‘them’: the academic who

carries expert knowledge and the ‘informant’ who does not. It must be noted that there is a well-documented historical tendency for university-led research projects to approach communities and research participants as objects of study instead of as co-creators of knowledge (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Strega, 2005). Even when a concerted effort is made on the part of researchers to bring balance to these uneven power relations, researchers’ inevitable intertwinement in systems of domination can contribute, however unwittingly, to the muting of community and participant voices. Following from Strega (2005), researchers who are committed to the end goal of social change should strive to develop anti-oppressive and transgressive approaches and attitudes towards conducting research as well as towards the relationships one develops and maintains in the field. In this respect, what lessons can be gleaned from this project in particular?

First, I would like to highlight the need to develop a committed and protracted relationship with the community. In my case, this has been a particular challenge, as I was most interested in talking to and working with SAWP workers who had no formal affiliations with community or labour organizing activities. This meant that I had few avenues for making connections to workers outside of informal outreach activities. I would not have been able to successfully recruit, interview, and conduct arts-based workshops with workers if it had not been for my previous experience as a Frontier College labourer-teacher and community worker. I have genuine and long-lasting ties to the migrant worker community, particularly in Leamington. Even though I was not affiliated with any particular group at the time of my research, it was easy for me to strike up conversations with workers about their lives, as I was able to relate their stories to my own experiences working on farms and living in bunkhouses with migrant workers. My commitment to the community was thus immediately observable, and led to my ability to build trusting relationships with research participants – particularly those who took part in my weekly sessions. I have since been able to visit with workshop participants in their homes in Mexico, and in a sense have been able to help them to communicate their experiences in this project with their families, who may have difficulty understanding how their loved ones were involved in artistic creation and research while in Canada. In short, adding an ‘action’ dimension to the research endeavour in this context means more than just a commitment to scholarly goals, but perhaps more importantly it must involve a long-term commitment to the emancipatory goals of the community.

A second and related recommendation has to do with the development and design of research methods that are not only suited to answering particular research questions, but that are also culturally appropriate to the community with whom the research is taking place. The use of theatre-based pedagogical methods may not be suited to every group and every context. Disastrous examples of how not to employ such techniques abound in the scholarly literature. The use of the Theatre of the Oppressed, for example, must be undertaken sensitively and cannot be forced upon a group. My own decision for choosing this method was grounded in my own experience of having a group of workers approach me with the request of producing community art back when I was a community worker in Leamington in 2005. As well, as I have discussed in the body of the thesis, the use of performance-based tactics in the context of political action has a long history among working class communities both in Latin America and among Hispanic communities in the United States. At no time did it feel particularly out of place or strained to employ games, activities and a performance element to this research project. Decisions to undertake unconventional approaches to research with marginalized communities must be grounded in an explicit understanding of what may or may not be deemed acceptable and appropriate for the community with whom the researcher intends to work.

My third remark is a purely methodological observation. In the process of both conducting fieldwork and data analysis, I have found that my employment of arts-informed methods has had a profound impact on the rigor of the scholarly knowledge produced. This is in addition to the ethical concerns surrounding the appropriateness both politically and culturally of scholarly methods that directly engage community members in knowledge production. I found that mixing collective creation with the more traditional method of conducting semi-structured interviews in a dialectical fashion provided a means of more deeply examining workers' experiences. This is relevant to the way in which qualitative research may be conducted more generally. This is especially true in the context of research that seeks to uncover and examine matters that are difficult to discuss, particularly among historically marginalized or oppressed communities. I recommend that researchers who are designing and implementing research in such contexts consider the use of non-traditional forms of inquiry as a way of developing not only a more ethical approach to community-based research, but also one that could potentially be said to be more rigorous, and thus more significant overall.

### **A Final Word**

My intention in this project has been to shed light on an area that has not been discussed in much detail elsewhere, namely the everyday responses of workers themselves to despotic migration and employment policies and practices. A thought that I wish to leave you with is that while workers face enormous constraints to speaking out – the desire for something better remains strong. While the standard model of work for migrant workers in Canada’s agricultural industry remains grounded in everyday confinement and a vast restriction of rights – there are potential fissures through which a modicum of freedom may be sought and even attained. Activists, scholars and indeed workers themselves need to keep striving for a world in which work – particularly work at the margins of the labour market – is valued. In the words of one worker from Mexico (Ruben):

Employers and the government need to think about us. They need to really value the dedication, effort and the sacrifice of the worker. They need to value all of that. Because there is a lot that is exposed in this play – because we sacrifice a lot for this work, and it benefits them. They take advantage of all of this – and there are no guarantees for us, there just aren’t. So I hope they will understand this part – at least they could recognize the work that we do.

And in the simple yet powerful words of one anonymous audience member (Audience member 3): “we don’t ask for much; just to live normally – like normal people.”

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> This story is a personal account of an incident which took place on a farm during my Frontier College placement in 2003.

<sup>ii</sup> Some of the ideas discussed in this chapter have been previously explored in my article entitled “Barely legal: Racism and migrant farm labour in the context of Canadian multiculturalism” (Perry, 2012b), published by Taylor & Francis in the peer reviewed journal, *Citizenship Studies*.

<sup>iii</sup> By 1800 slavery had all but disappeared in both Lower and Upper Canada.

<sup>iv</sup> Previously Human Resources Services Development Canada (HRSDC).

<sup>v</sup> The processes through which a Canadian employer can employ a low-skilled temporary foreign worker differ between programs. SAWP workers are screened and selected by state labour officials in their countries of origin before being allowed to participate in the program. In Ontario, where the majority of SAWP workers are located, employers recruit workers through Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S.), a grower-administered body which remains at arms-length from any government agency. Workers are seasonal, and can stay in Canada for up to 8 months, working for the same employer. Upon completion of their contract they must return directly to the sending country. While in Canada, their housing is provided by their employer. This housing is communal and is located on the employer’s property. Employers interested in hiring TFW agricultural workers must request a Labour Market Opinion (LMO) directly through Employment and Social Development Canada. Once a positive LMO has been obtained, employers find their own employees through the use of private recruiters or recruitment agencies. Unlike the SAWP, this process is not regulated by either the federal government in Canada or in the worker’s country of origin. Employees interested in working in Canada apply for a work permit directly with the named employer. This permit is subject to approval by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Once hired, non-SAWP TFW agricultural workers are not seasonal and may work in Canada for up to 4 years before they are required to return to their country of origin.

<sup>vi</sup> This dissertation focuses on the structure of the SAWP and the experiences of workers who participate in that more established program. I have chosen to focus my research on SAWP workers as at the time I was conducting my field research (2011) there were still very few non-SAWP workers employed in agriculture. I encountered no non-SAWP farm workers during my fieldwork, though I did encounter an increasing use of the TFW program in related industries that may not have access to the SAWP program, for example the vegetable packing industry (as opposed to general labour, greenhouse work and harvesting).

<sup>vii</sup> In Ontario, the inability of agricultural workers to unionize has been met with legal challenges from the United Food and Commercial Workers (Preibisch & Raper, 2007). These challenges have been grounded for the most part in an appeal to workers’ international labour rights, for example those protected under the International Labour Organization’s Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, to which migrant workers are entitled (see Basok & Carasco, 2010; see Verma, 2003). However, formal treaties such as this one, which emphasize universal human rights in lieu of citizenship rights (to which migrant workers have no claim), contain no explicit outline of exactly how they are to be enforced either within particular states or across borders (Basok & Carasco, 2010; Vosko, 2011).

<sup>viii</sup> In the past few years, the process of blacklisting, a tactic employed by sending countries’ Ministries of Labour, has become a common form of punishing workers for perceived

indiscretions, such as speaking out about workplace abuses. In British Columbia, for example, where migrant agricultural workers have the legal right to collectively organize, blacklisting workers from the program has been used as a way from dissuading workers from organizing in their workplaces (see Vosko, 2013).

<sup>ix</sup> For a critical discussion on the Hukou system and its effects on rural migrants in urban China see Solinger (1999), as well as Chan & Zhang (1999) and Cheng & Seldon (1994).

<sup>x</sup> Recently, SAWP workers involved in community organizing through groups such as Justicia for Migrant Workers (2013), have been addressing migrant workers' rights through the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, with some success. For example, in the summer of 2013, the HRTTO awarded \$23,000 to a Saint Lucian worker who filed a human rights complaint for being fired for complaining to his employer about racist taunts (Muir, 2013). This decision in particular addresses, and is a potential avenue for mitigating the sovereign power employers have over their workers.

<sup>xi</sup> In Canada, this type of state and employer collusion in the enforcement of worker discipline has a precedent in the state's involvement in enforcing, through the courts, workplace rules and regulations in Canadian railroad operations in the 1850s (Craven & Traves, 1986). It is interesting to note that historically, the Canadian state seems to have taken a keen interest in how 'low-skilled' workplaces are regulated with regards to worker deference at an everyday scale. For example: railroad workers could be fined a month's pay by the court and have a second month's pay withheld by the employer for breaking company regulations, or even jailed if they were found to put persons or property at risk (p. 49).

<sup>xii</sup> While SAWP workers do not reside in employers' homes, as I shall investigate in more detail below, employers' obligation to provide housing to workers on company property initiates a similar living-at-work arrangement for farm workers as is experienced by live-in caregivers.

<sup>xiii</sup> In this section I am indebted to conversations that I have had with Emily Reid-Musson, and particularly to her work on social reproduction and migrant farm workers. Some of the material explored here was presented jointly with Emily at the 2011 Canadian Association of Geographers Conference at the University of Calgary (Perry & Reid-Musson, 2011).

<sup>xiv</sup> Some of the ideas discussed in this chapter have been previously explored in my article entitled "A silent revolution: 'Image Theatre' as a system of decolonization" (Perry, 2012a), published by Taylor & Francis in the peer reviewed journal, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*.

<sup>xv</sup> These areas focused primarily on Leamington's Walmart parking lot and the patch of Erie Street between the downtown area (known locally as 'uptown') and the shopping district near the corner of Erie and Seacliffe.

<sup>xvi</sup> As I shall discuss in more detail in the following chapter, I interviewed one former SAWP worker who had his own apartment in town.

<sup>xvii</sup> While Lourdes was the only woman worker that I interviewed one on one, I managed to conduct an hour-long in-depth focus group-style conversation with all four female participants after one of our weekly drama workshops.

<sup>xviii</sup> In their research Sawchuk and Kempf (2008, 2009, 2011) note that inter-cultural exchange is a key feature of the SAWP experience – both in terms of the conflicts that develop between workers of different nationalities, and in terms of the learning opportunities that these connections can present. My research subjects are primarily Mexican, and as such, this was not a significant finding of mine. That said, when asked, most of my research participants did not

discuss these dynamics in any detail. With certain key exceptions, when workers did discuss workers from other countries, they expressed curiosity more than anything else, as they discussed how they were mostly kept separated. While speculation on why this is goes beyond the scope of this research, this could be related to factors that neither I nor other researchers considered, for example how greenhouse work in Leamington is structured as opposed to other forms of farm work elsewhere in Ontario.

<sup>xix</sup> At the time of his interview, Iván had left the SAWP yet continued to live and work in Canada.

<sup>xx</sup> See endnote xvii, above.

<sup>xxi</sup> Participants are presented in alphabetic order.

<sup>xxii</sup> Note that the four sketches provided are all of male participants from Mexico who could be considered to be more experienced and older.

<sup>xxiii</sup> For more on this topic see Randall (1996).

<sup>xxiv</sup> In the case of this event, an official complaint was filed to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which ruled in favour of the worker in 2013 (see Muir, 2013)

<sup>xxv</sup> Interviews with Iván were conducted in English, all other interviews with Mexican or Guatemalan workers were conducted in Spanish.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Following Sawchuk and Kempf's (2008) theory of workplace learning in the SAWP, John's strong opinions about his experiences in the program are in keeping with the fact that he has developed a relationship with the migrant advocacy group Justicia for Migrant Workers.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Given its strategic and geographical importance to the Underground Railroad, Essex County has been home to large communities of African-Canadians for many years. Oral history conducted by The North American Black Historical Museum in Amherstburg, Ontario revealed that there is a long and dark history of racial tensions in the area. One particularly salient practice recorded in oral history narratives is racial segregation in the workplace. For example Harland "Zip" Johnson, born in 1921, remembers the following:

The white farmers and people used to hire coloured and set them at a side table – wouldn't eat with them. They would eat at another table five or ten feet away and that was a tradition and all at the same time might have a coloured cook – cooking the food. Seems ridiculous, but that's what happened. It was an old tradition. 'Custom', my dad used to call it (The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre, 1993, Harland (Zip) Johnson, para. 4).

Perhaps more than any other practice, the bunkhouse curfew my participants described conjures images of days gone by. Oral history accounts suggest that the region, the town of Leamington in particular, has a history of 'sundown' practices. These practices, which restricted the movement of African-Americans within town limits to the daytime only were examined in the context of the United States by Loewen (2005). While to my knowledge these practices have not been examined in much detail in the Canadian context, oral history narratives suggest that this particular form of racial segregation was practiced in Essex County. Recently, for example, David Suzuki, who spent his teenage years in Leamington wrote the following in his autobiography as a way of demonstrating the particular type of racism he experienced:

...we moved to the town of Leamington... when Dad found a job in a dry-cleaning plant. It was 1946, and when we arrived there, some Leamingtonians boasted to me that 'no colored person has ever stayed here beyond sunset'. We

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were the first ‘colored’ family to move into the town, and we were nervous (Suzuki, 2006, p. 23).

To add some substance to Suzuki’s claim, I spoke with Fred Johnson, who at the time of our conversation was 96 years old, and had lived in the town of Harrow, 25 kilometers Southwest of Leamington his entire life. Fred’s grandfather was a freed slave from Kentucky who settled in the very house where Fred now resides (The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre, 1993). During our conversation, Fred told me stories about how when he was a boy his father used to go to Leamington during the agricultural off-season in order to buy melons to bring back and sell in Harrow. He described to me the story his father used to tell:

He went to Leamington to buy these melons and this boy saw them and he said, 'boy you niggers have a hard time. You can't stay in Leamington over night and that's not right' and he gave them a whole lot of extra (money). They weren't allowed in Leaminton overnight. That was what my dad was telling me. That was my dad's time (personal communication, August 18, 2011).

Bunkhouse curfews that require that temporary foreign workers be in their dormitories and accounted for by 10 pm restrict the movements of particular racialized communities (Hispanic, Black, Asian) in the town of Leamington and other rural areas in Southwest Ontario in much the same way that alleged sundown practices would have restricted the movements of African-Canadians in Leamington at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Unlike Mexican workers, Guatemalan workers come to Canada with two-year contracts.

<sup>xxix</sup> This name is italicized in order to denote that ‘Jaime’ is a fictional character.

<sup>xxx</sup> Meaning that he did not hold back his thoughts.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Indeed, while I have not examined this in detail here, there were gender dynamics at play in workers’ motivations to go to class. On the one hand, the ESL classroom was a place where workers could interrupt the performance of masculinity that is expected in both the workplace and the bunkhouse. For workers who were not entirely comfortable with the need to play macho, the ESL class provided a space to explore different parts of their identities. As well, though workers did not talk to me directly about this, in observing workers with their teachers, masculinity played another role in the ESL classroom – and in the relationships that workers formed with their female teachers. Teachers would talk about their favorite students in very familial terms. For workers, who had all left their families back home, I had the sense that the teachers would take on the familial role of ‘daughter’ or intimate confidant.

<sup>xxxii</sup> My interview with Ignacio took place at the Frontier College office – so ‘here’ in this interview refers to the ESL classroom.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> I did not collect the names of audience members.