A white teenage checker with Mexican pickers. Photo by Seth M. Holmes.

Although the farm management—including Shelly, who supervises the white picking and checking crews—sees the employment of white teenage checkers as developing positive values toward agriculture and diversity in the valley, checkers learn also that they deserve to have power over Mexicans, even those old enough to be their parents or grandparents. The teenagers are paid minimum wage while being allowed to talk and sit most of the time; the pickers have to kneel constantly and work as fast as possible in order to keep their jobs. The white checkers are given power over how many pounds are marked for the pickers, and I observed more often than not that checkers marked less weight on the cards than the scale displayed. Numerous times over the course of my fieldwork, I observed supervisors telling checkers that the laborers should not pick more than thirty pounds of berries per bucket. Supervisors indicated that more weight would damage the berries. In addition, they indicated that the pickers would try to "get away with" putting more berries per bucket because they were "lazy." Of course, there was no way for me to estimate precisely how much the berries in

At the same time, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence incorporates a measure of internalization, which could be seen in Triqui conceptions of pride that may partially function to justify their position in the occupational hierarchy. In addition, the medical gaze of clinicians in the field of migrant health did not allow them to see social inequalities or how these inequalities produced sickness. Instead, they often inadvertently blamed the suffering of their patients on the patients themselves—their behavior, culture, or racialized biology—and consequently recommended interventions inadvertently complicit with the harmful social structure. The naturalization of social and health inequalities was especially effective because it took place at the level of the self-evidently natural, the body. The structural nature of these inequalities is illuminated by the fact that even idealistic and ethical farmers and clinicians operate within a gray zone that neutralizes and sometimes even reverses their efforts at ethical action. The importance of political economic structures was highlighted further by the lack of choice experienced by my Triqui companions as they made the mortally dangerous yet necessary trek through the border desert.

This multiply determined structure of inequalities seemed to explain everything and made it especially difficult for me to imagine social, economic, political, and health change. Whether hope is based in the unknown, the unnameable as described by Crapanzano,[1] or the practice of leveraging knowledge for symbolic, political, and material change as described by Miyazaki,[2] the harmful and overdetermined social and symbolic structures at work in U.S.-Mexico migration seemed to leave little room for hope.

Pierre Bourdieu, whose concepts inform much of the analysis in this book, is often described as a theorist of social reproduction. Scholars use his theories to analyze the ways in which social and symbolic structures lead to the reproduction of the whole social system, including its inequalities and hierarchies. While his theoretical framework is often understood as an overdetermined, all-explaining metanarrative of reproduction with no possibility for change, there are several places in which Bourdieu focuses explicitly on the potential for transformation. The possibility of social change can be seen especially in his concepts of habitus and symbolic violence. For Bourdieu, habitus indicates the historically accreted