

Legality and ways of reconciling health (in)access among Mexican immigrant micro-entrepreneurs in a Southern California swap meet*

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The Swap Meet

Flea markets
Outdoor market
Remate
Pulga
Swap meet (swami)





Agenda

- 1. Present study *Methods* | *Participants* | *Site description*
- 2. Past research
- 3. Preliminary results
 Pain | The 'Fil' | Citizenship | Heat | Strengths
- 4. Discussion

 Matrix of Health
- 5. Implications
- 6. Conclusion/ Next steps

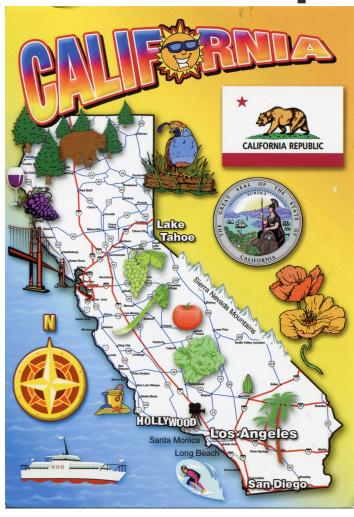


Present Study

- Weekly visits to field sites
- Ethnographic research
 - Participant observations
 - Informal interviews and conversations
 - Informal interviews with 8 Mexican vendors
 - 5 females, & 3 males | 2 undocumented, 5 documented, & 1 unknown
- Observations over the span of 4 months (and continuing)
 - Building rapport | Relationships | Trust



Site description



Population 380,000

Mean annual income: 57,000

People in poverty: 20%

In July, average weather is 96 degrees Fahrenheit

56% white 8 % Black 46 % Latino 6% Asian

Median age of native born: 26 Median age of foreign born: 43



Past research

- Ethnic entrepreneurship (Bishop & Surfield, 2013)
- Street vendors (Estrada)
- Flea markets in urban cities such as Chicago (Morales, 2009, 2011)
- Health in-access of undocumented (Vargas Bustamante 2012)
- Precarious work conditions of immigrants (Connell 1993; Mehta et al 2002; fletcher et al 2006; Garnage 1999)

Now, preliminary thematic results...



Pain

"Doctors cannot cure arthritis.

And, I cant either.

But...I can take away the pain in your body that you get from working in the 'fil'."



The 'Fíl'

Customer:

"Do you have these in size 12?," she asks in Spanish?

Me: "Hmm, let me check." I shuffle through the pants section.

She continues:

"I am looking for stretchy jeans...I got a C-Section two weeks ago and it was done horizontally. I am looking for jeans to work in since I work in the 'fil'."



Citizenship: Out of pocket

One of the clothing store vendors paid 3,000 + dollars for teeth care and knows she needs more care and is saving up for it. But she will not get it done until she has the savings accumulated.

Citizens: take it for granted almost. They seem to be like, yeah, I can access health insurance and life insurance, for example.

"Yeah, I do have health insurance...and life insurance."



Physical work of market...& the heat

- Summer day sights
 - Children
 - Family
 - Wet towels
 - Portable Air conditioners
 - Lots of bottled water
 - No water fountains & no restrooms



Strengths of workers

- The skill
- The networks
- Clientele relationships
- Autonomy & citizenship



Discussion Health tied to the market

I argue that the **market shines light** on the salience of work and health from different perspectives and **materializes** the experiences from **both the vendor and customer** perspective **across the immigrant status spectrum.**



Implications: Matrix of health of vendors

	Undocumented	Documented
Not doing financially well	?	Access to low- income health insurances & safety net clinics.
Doing financially well	May be able to afford to pay price of private health care (dental example)	Access to mainstream health insurances.



Next steps

- Autonomy of work
- How legality and citizenship is infused into the business ventures of Mexican migrants.
- Exploring the hierarchy of the market
 - Not all vending spaces are created equal



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Asking about citizenship

- Indirect ways of asking:
 - Travel outside of the country
 - Access to healthcare
 - Social Security benefits
 - Voting



Gender

- Customers & Vendors
 - Trans customers
 - Females vendors & autonomy (familial role)
 - Female vendors are usually accompanied
 - Male vendors more often alone
- Warnings about sexual harassers in the swap meet

