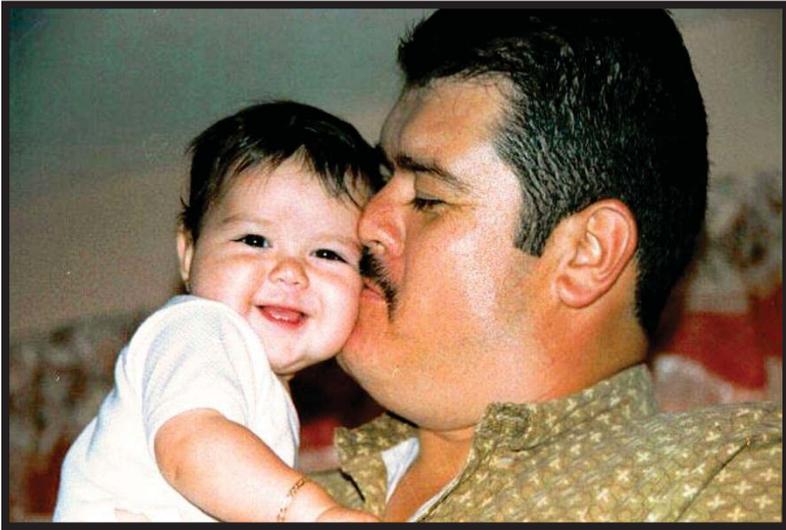


Chapter 9

Jorge Enrique in Mexico: Will He Leave His Home? *



Jorge Enrique with one of his children

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Narrative Summary and Economic Background

Jorge Enrique's life changed dramatically when the tire factory where he worked, Euzkadi, shut down. Located in El Salto, Mexico, the factory was owned by a multinational company and in the past had had a strong labor union. It was a very good job for Jorge Enrique, with better wages and benefits than many other places in Mexico. But in 2001, the owners said that Mexico's new lower import duties allowed cheaper foreign tires to enter the country and they couldn't compete without concessions from labor. Now in his thirties, Jorge Enrique is involved with his union's efforts to force the factory's reopening. He wonders if he should go back to work in the United States, which he did when he was younger. It would be easy for him, because he has a "green card" – a legal entry visa.

The old Mexican economic system crashed in 1982 under the weight of mounting international debt and fiscal deficits. It was a closed economy; domestic production was protected by high import tariffs and major industries were often in government hands. The immediate response to the crisis included severe economic austerity measures backed by loans from the IMF. This was followed by economic restructuring, particularly after 1988, marked by privatizations and liberalization of international trade and investment. Over the next decade, these measures were supported by Mexico's implementing the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations and, in 1996, signing the North American Free Trade Area Agreement (NAFTA) with the U.S. and Canada.

Mexico's economic restructuring affected El Salto. Foreign companies made new investments – Continental Tire of Germany bought Euzkadi – and old plants, like the textile factory where Jorge Enrique's father worked, had to close. In the country as a whole, the already ongoing migration to the U.S. accelerated as agriculture's contribution to the economy fell by nearly two-thirds, down to 4 percent of GDP by 2000.

NARRATIVE

When Jorge Enrique Was Young

Jorge Enrique was born thirty years ago, in San Antonio Juanacastle, a little village in the state of Jalisco. He has no siblings, because his mother was sterilized, without her knowledge or consent, shortly after he was born. San Antonio has been there since the end of the nineteenth century. It was named after a large waterfall that used to flow nearby a long time ago, when the river Lerma was huge. The village is close to the large industrial corridor named El Salto. Jorge Enrique and the corridor grew up together. When he was a child, there was already a textile factory near the river where he and his friends used to play. His father worked there for some years. Before that, around the time Jorge Enrique was born, his father had been a *campesino* and then later a bricklayer. When the big factories began to come to El Salto, a lot of people started to work in construction.

One of the first new factories was the tire factory, Euzkadi. Many of Jorge Enrique's uncles and grown-up cousins started working there; he started dreaming about working there, too. Unlike the labor unions connected with the government's party – the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) – Euzkadi's labor union was independent. It was very good at getting workers' jobs back after they were fired and getting good salaries and benefits for them. It even achieved collective bargaining.

Jorge Enrique was still in school when an economic crisis hit his family. The textile factory where his father was working got into economic difficulties and the government bought it, later transferring it to one of the government labor organizations. The bosses changed and soon the workers went on strike. His father had to look for another way to make a living and support the family. They had saved some money, so they enlarged their house and opened a restaurant. They sold *pozole*, *tostadas*, and hamburgers. It still opens on Sundays when people go to Mass and on Tuesdays, when lots of people come to visit San Antonio.

Going North

Many people in Jorge Enrique's mother's family had gone to the United States to live and work, sometimes for short stays, sometimes for

many years. He remembered his uncles and his cousins leaving and coming back with good money. That made it possible for them to afford more things in San Antonio. Jorge Enrique saw this not only in his family but with other people, too. The travelers brought things back from the States, and a lot of people in the village started dressing differently, even talking differently. Cable TV arrived, as well as many new things for the house that people had not seen before. Sometimes Jorge Enrique's relatives would not come back for a long time, but they kept sending money. And when they did return, there would be a huge party. More and more farmers in the area were starting to work in the factories in El Salto or leaving to go to the States.

When Jorge Enrique finished high school, he thought about going north, too. He knew he didn't want to continue his studies and he was not interested in the jobs in El Salto. He had been working in the textile factory in the afternoons and already knew of the dismissals caused by economic difficulties. Jobs in El Salto generally didn't pay well enough, he thought; so at nineteen years old, he went to the U.S. He got all the papers to do it legally; his relatives helped him, since they already had contacts in the U.S. He never thought of going there illegally, nor had anybody in his family. When he went in 1994, Jorge Enrique lived with members of his family in Chicago and worked with them doing landscaping. Although their customs were not the same any more as those in San Antonio, they were similar. He went north with the little English he had learned in school, but once there he learned much more and that helped him meet other people. He continued going to Mass on Sundays. He was young and restless, though, and the first year spent his time enjoying himself.

For several years he would go back and forth. He stayed with his family in San Antonio for four months in the winter, when snow puts a stop to the landscaping work and workers in that field can collect unemployment benefits in the U.S. (a friend arranged it so he could be paid without the periodic interviews in the unemployment office). It was then that Jorge Enrique started thinking more seriously about working at the tire factory. It was very hard to get a job there, however. The union required that one first buy a *pase* and the *pases* were very expensive. When he first considered it, he didn't have the money to buy one. He figured that if he began saving money more carefully while working in the U.S., he soon would have the money.

So he went back north once more, this time to Inglewood near Los Angeles to work with his uncle. He was determined to save the money he

needed for the *pase*. After a year, he did. He could have stayed in the States longer, but he missed his parents and family. He also did not like the jobs he found available to him in the U.S. So he returned to San Antonio at the end of 2000.

Union Membership

When Jorge Enrique returned, he had saved enough money to buy the union *pase* to work at Euzkadi, the tire factory, which in the meantime had been taken over by a German company, Continental Tire. He paid the *pase* cost of sixty thousand pesos (about six thousand dollars) and he got a job there, starting in the cleaning area. Little by little he got better jobs, working eventually in the production area. When he first started working, his involvement with the labor union was limited to attending the general assembly to find out what was going on. He liked the job progression he could look forward to and, even more, the fact that he was assigned a specific task to do – not like in his jobs in the U.S., where the boss constantly was changing what he had to do. He felt that that was being a *milusos* (literally, a thousand uses) and found it degrading.

Soon Jorge Enrique got married, to a woman named Isabel from Rancho Nuevo, which is close to San Antonio. Since he was a *tire man* he was attractive to the girls, it being well known that their salaries and benefits were the best in town. They had a little boy, who was the joy of the whole family. They expanded Jorge Enrique's parents' house and they lived there, with enough independence to suit them.

The tire company was working at full capacity and there was a lot of opportunity to work overtime, as much as the equivalent of four extra days a week. Jorge Enrique was interested in saving money and worked as much overtime as he could. Everything seemed to be going smoothly...

Trouble at Euzkadi

One day, in the fall of 2001, Jorge Enrique read in the newspaper: "250 Workers from Euzkadi will be Losing Their Jobs." Then he learned from a priest friend of the family that over the last year, 22,500 jobs had been lost in El Salto. He was upset and worried; he knew the situation could become difficult. He figured that the employees who would be fired

would be the ones most recently hired. He thought, “They couldn’t fire those of us who’ve been there for a long time; that wouldn’t be fair.”

He also had heard that the Goodyear tire factory in Tultitlan, Estado de México, had closed. That worried him, because the struggle there was not any longer about keeping the factory open; now the most they could ask for was a fair compensation. He hoped the same would not happen at Euzkadi, where the labor union was trying to negotiate a freeze on firing in exchange for workers increasing production and reducing absenteeism. The latter was a big source of complaint from management, who said that workers didn’t mind skipping one or two days of work a week, because their wages were so high that the lost income didn’t affect them much.

Jorge Enrique waited to see what things the union had been able to negotiate. He didn’t want to be included in the dismissal list and he was anxious. He now was married and had a child. He was confident he would be staying in the factory, but nothing was certain. He remembered well when his father had lost his job under similar circumstances. He started thinking about going to the U.S. again, to save money and send it to his family. But with a wife and son, it was even more difficult than before to think about being far away from the family.

The Closing and Afterwards

The management of Euzkadi alleged that new competition from imported Korean tires, resulting from Mexico’s lowered import tariffs, made it impossible for them to compete any longer under the company’s current labor costs. An agreement could not be reached. The factory did not dismiss any employees; instead, it closed on December 16, 2001. Jorge Enrique believes it closed illegally. By this time, he had decided to stay in Mexico for the time being, so he became fully involved with the union. His job with the union was to keep watch outside the plant, to make sure Continental – the factory’s current owners – did not remove the machinery from the plant. He also spent a lot of time with other union members in assemblies and meetings.

The workers’ protest – which they called a *huelga*, a strike – erupted on January 22, 2002. There were demonstrations and attempts to meet with political leaders. At one point, the union leadership went to Europe, to go directly to Continental’s headquarters in Germany. Many international human rights organizations also began to pay attention. In June,

Continental tried to formally shut down the plant in El Salto, but the union guards held firm. At the end of August, the union decided to end the protest, although they would continue to keep management out of the factory while they pursued the legal process. After almost a year of striking, on December 16, 2002, 250 workers formerly in the union opted for the liquidation the company was offering, which Jorge Enrique thought was a pittance. One hundred fifty of them have already gone to the United States.

Continental tried several ways and on several occasions to oust the union guards and remove the equipment, but could not. The workers who were guarding the factory were under a lot of pressure to accept the liquidation but they never gave up. Then, in 2004, two years after the strike began, the Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje (a labor arbitration board) declared the strike to be “existent” – legal. It was a huge victory for the workers who were determined to hold out for a fair resolution to the conflict.

The Present: Fall 2004

The plant is still closed but Jorge Enrique keeps busy. He continues volunteering with the union as it tries to force the company to either reopen (his first choice) or to offer a better settlement. He has been involved in supervising local elections. He works with his wife selling leather goods in the store she runs and helps her take care of the children while she works there. The store does not make much money, but it earns enough for them to eat. He also works in the restaurant with his parents.

He is starting to think about going to the States again, because he needs to earn more money. What stops him is his family, and not because they say anything about his current situation. He doesn't want to leave them. Being with them, watching his children (they have two now) grow up is the most important thing for him. He actually thanks God for the additional time he can spend with the children and the rest of the family now that the plant is closed. His religion gives him much support, especially the sacraments. The church is close by and he and his family go regularly to Mass and receive communion. In 2004 he had his second child baptized. His faith helps him to put his trust in God.



Jorge Enrique and his family, at the baptism of one of his children

He thinks about the future a lot, trying to figure out what management might do, what the union and the politicians might do. He realizes that it is very unlikely the plant will just reopen. Some workers think that the best outcome would be to reopen the factory as a cooperative and put its management in the workers' hands, but that too is unlikely. He feels lucky in not having pressure from his wife to accept the liquidation compensation, which he thinks unfairly low. Many workers who took the liquidation have already spent it, and have had to look for other jobs. There are many more *taquerias* and taxi drivers around as a result. That would be his future if he accepted the money and stayed. Of course, if there is an emergency, he might have to accept the liquidation money.

Jorge Enrique also has his eye on some property that the company owns, and he knows that the proceeds from its sale would be distributed only among the remaining union members, the ones who have not accepted the earlier settlement. He knows there is a risk in holding out like this; if the union is unsuccessful then he will be forced to take whatever the company offers, and it may well be very little. Not everyone in the village approves of the union's efforts to force the plant to reopen, and these people are critical of this decision. But he has thrown in his lot with the union and he has support from the other people who have joined in

this struggle. So he thinks and he works and waits for the future to happen.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Jorge Enrique's Traditional Culture

Jorge Enrique's roots lie in the traditional rural culture of Mexico, the culture in which his parents grew up. However, this culture has been affected by the industrialization and modernization that have occurred in nearby El Salto over the last thirty or so years. Many of the traits below are not as strong now as they used to be. Moreover, all of them may not be dominant elements in Jorge Enrique's life; however they are all there in the background and play a role in his world.

1. *Strong Family Bonds.* Family is so important that preference given to family members in business and politics is not considered corruption. The relationship between parents and godparents – *compadrazgo* – is especially important.
2. *Sense of Community.* There is a tradition of community organization and working together on projects, particularly church-related ones.
3. *Religion.* The Catholic faith occupies a central place in people's lives, with Sunday Mass an important observance.
4. *Machismo.* Men are dominant in the culture, with the result that women have a distinctly inferior status.
5. *Fatalism.* A common expression is *Si Dios quiere* – if God wants.
6. *Focus on a Leader.* Communities often function around a leader, who is called *el responsable*.

Jorge Enrique's Critical Decisions

1. He decided to migrate to the United States to work, after he had finished secondary school.

What were his options? He says he had no other option. His father wanted him to keep studying and prepare for a career. But Jorge Enrique did not like this idea. He had already worked for a while in a textile factory until they had downsized and didn't care much for that, either.

What cultural values lay behind his decision? He says he was young and he wanted to do something different. He wanted excitement and he wanted to travel. He also wanted to make money. He knew from his relatives who lived there that he could do this and knowing that they were there influenced him as well.

What cultural values were reflected in the reactions of the other people in his life to this decision? His parents were sad, because he is their only child and they didn't want him to go away and maybe even stay in the U.S. As for everyone else, Jorge Enrique says that one *norteño* more or less made no difference to them.

2. He decided to work at the Euzkadi factory, several years later.

What were his options? Jorge Enrique was legally in the United States making good money at the time, and he could have stayed. He says now that that might have been better, but who could have foreseen that the factory would close?

What cultural values lay behind his decision? Money, he says; no other reason. When the factory was at full production, people could earn whatever they wanted with all the overtime available.

What cultural values were reflected in the reactions of the other people in his life to this decision? Other than a few of his close friends, Jorge Enrique says many people were jealous of his new job because they're not used to seeing people better themselves.

3. He decided to refuse to accept management's liquidation offer and instead stayed active with the union after Euzkadi closed.

What were his options? He says he worked hard and saved his money while he worked at the factory, and so he has options open to him now. He does not have to take the liquidation settlement, which he considers unfair. Also, his wife has a retail business that brings in some money. However, his main option was – and still is – to go back to the United States. His uncle Chava tells him there is a lot of work available there.

What cultural values lay behind his decision? Jorge Enrique says that the company's liquidation offer to its workers is not fair. His goal is to get the factory reopened and if not, for it to give a good liquidation settlement to the workers.

What cultural values were reflected in the reactions of the other people in his life to this decision? The people involved in the workers' actions – the workers and their families – support this action. But those not involved are critical of it.

Note: For all three of Jorge Enrique's decisions, *money* was an important factor. However, his *strong family ties* were the stronger motivation for the last two decisions. These two factors come together in the last decision: it was money, but it was not only for himself but for his family as well. Family ties also lay behind his parents' reaction to his original decision to go to the United States. The reaction of other people in town to his leaving – indifference – shows how much the traditional value of *community* has eroded in recent years. Their jealous response when he got the job at Euzkadi shows this as well.

Changes in Jorge Enrique's Life

In a certain sense, globalization has always been part of Jorge Enrique's life, through the long-standing and ongoing migration between Mexico and the United States. It is not a new phenomenon. Industrialization also brought economic changes, and it came to Jorge Enrique's world before he was born, when factories began to be built in El Salto. But industrialization is different from globalization. In fact, industrialization in

Mexico up to the 1980s took place behind high import barriers that protected it against global forces. But Mexico's opening to global economic forces accelerated in the 1990s, and Jorge Enrique has lived most of his adult life being affected by the changes it brought. Globalization most dramatically affected him when he lost his job at Euzkadi.

Consumption

A cada capillita le llega su fiestecita: Even a small chapel has a feast day. Even the poor can get to enjoy some little things.

Jorge Enrique has access to a larger variety of consumer goods and services because of the opening of the Mexican economy. Many new items are available in the stores, though not everyone can afford to buy them.

This is not a totally new phenomenon, however. Jorge Enrique could buy consumer goods like blue jeans and modern music in the village some time ago, when the industrial zone in El Salto was first established. Access to radio and television exposed him, and everybody in the village, to the wider world and to different ways of living. This exposure to modern consumption has been somewhat gradual, beginning with industrialization and speeded up by globalization.

More important, perhaps, Jorge Enrique has lived in the United States and is surrounded by friends and relatives traveling back and forth to the United States who expose him to many new consumer items. When he was working at Euzkadi, he had a good salary and was able to provide many of these new goods and services for his family. They enjoyed a way of life with many little luxuries, more than his father could have provided as a young man. Now that he is not working at Euzkadi, he and his family cannot live the same way. So his consumption was first broadened, and then lessened, by globalization.

What Jorge Enrique and his family consume today is different from life years ago in another way as well. People today make fewer things at home than they used to, preferring instead to buy them ready-made. For example, traditionally women made tortillas from scratch, starting with grinding the corn to make the flour. Today, Jorge Enrique's wife and many other women don't even buy flour to make tortillas but buy the tortillas already made from the store. With many of the women working outside the home, this is not surprising.

Production

Al que madruga Dios lo ayuda: God helps the industrious ones, who start early.

Factories began to be built in El Salto about thirty years ago and it quickly became an industrial zone. Many people in the area abandoned farming to take jobs at one of the factories; Jorge Enrique's father took one at a textile plant. Industrialization meant that people now had more choices than they did before in how they made a living.

Globalization really entered Mexico beginning in the 1980s, when it opened its economy much more broadly to international trade and other global forces. Among other things, the opening made possible foreign ownership of factories and the Euzkadi factory was bought by a German company. All this touched Jorge Enrique's life, but it was in the background; he was not aware of it.

It was when Jorge Enrique lost his job at Euzkadi that he felt globalization really affecting him. By 2001, the economic opening was lowering import duties and allowing more tire imports into the country. Continental Tire, the German company that owned Euzkadi, responded to the new competition first by trying to reduce its labor costs and, when that didn't succeed, then by shutting down the factory and dismissing all the workers. Industrialization had brought Jorge Enrique the option of working at the tire factory, but globalization made his job vulnerable to international forces.

Now, Jorge Enrique is a union activist volunteering to help guard the factory; he also works in the family restaurant and helps his wife in her business. He's gone from manufacturing to the service industry – at least temporarily and somewhat reluctantly.

Migration

El mono, the monkey: One who swings nimbly among branches.

For Jorge Enrique's village, the current migration has been an intensification of a phenomenon that already existed. Mexicans have been going to the U.S. to work for years; the north has always offered better economic opportunities. Sometimes they go back and forth between the countries; sometimes they settle in the north. In Jorge Enrique's family some of his mother's brothers migrated north years ago. But in recent years,

globalization has made this migration somewhat of a greater necessity; for the people in Mexico who have lost jobs, the incentive to migrate has increased. So the process has been accelerating.

For Jorge Enrique, the option to migrate to the U.S. is an accepted part of life. It was one of the first solutions that came to his mind when he was young and searching for a way to make money, and it's an option that's always been there since the strike. Migrating to the U.S. is one of several possible choices he sees for his future. In addition, for him, the migration process is both legal and easy because he has a "green card," a permanent resident visa for the U.S. This contrasts greatly with the large number of Mexicans who have gone north illegally.

Migration to the U.S. today is different, but it is a difference not in kind but in degree. The lure of working in the United States seems to have increased. In fact, the number of Mexican-born people living in the United States has grown tenfold from the 1970s to the 2000s.

Social Relations

La raza, the race: For Mexicans it means a group of people with whom one is very close, even if they're not blood related: my people.

The economic opening and the ongoing migration to the U.S. have changed many social relationships in Jorge Enrique's village. He learns about new attitudes and customs from the media. He sees and hears for himself that there are other ways of doing things, different ways of living. Also, like many other people in his village, he has gone to the U.S. and returned, bringing new attitudes and customs back with him.

One big change has been in the external manifestations of the traditional *machismo*. In the past, women's lives revolved solely around their homes and families. But today, many women work in the factories in the industrial area. When Jorge Enrique was growing up, he already saw women working outside the home, especially before marriage. Now, his wife Isabel owns and manages her own small retail business, and Jorge Enrique not only accepts this, he is happy about it. He is also very involved in caring for their children now that the union strike allows him more time to do so, and he enjoys this. His attitude would not have been common a generation ago (and indeed is not so common even today).

Jorge Enrique has always felt rooted in the community of San Antonio, where he grew up. But because of migration, his community actually reaches beyond San Antonio; members of his extended family live in the United States. He lived with these relatives during his stay in the north and still feels connected to them.

Globalization has changed his social relations as well. Since he was fired from the factory, he has formed stronger relationships with the other men in the union, in particular with the ones who, like him, are holding out for a better settlement from the company. The union's task is to guard the doors of the plant to ensure that it stays closed and nothing is removed while negotiations go on. Jorge Enrique and a small group of men are in charge of this. But it does not involve much effort, and leaves a great deal of time for socializing. These men have become an important part of Jorge Enrique's life.

Political Relations

Ay, reata, no te revientes que es el último jalón: Rope, please, do not break; we have only one more tug left to do. Hang on, we're almost done.

Because of his involvement in the union's struggles, Jorge Enrique has had greater exposure to the Mexican political system and how it works than he would have otherwise. He has become familiar with the local judicial process – and he has seen how unjust, and even corrupt, it can be. One might look askance at Jorge Enrique's union charging a steep fee for a worker to join the union; however, he does not seem to consider this practice inappropriate. He did see inequity in the political system's response to the union's efforts to obtain a favorable outcome of its dispute with the tire company. He perceived that the judiciary system showed partiality to the company and that there was no due process. Jorge Enrique did not hesitate to label it corruption: his eyes have been opened to many things. Moreover, his political awareness is actually global now. He has been exposed to politics at the international level, not just the local or national level. He has learned about the German company that owns Euzkadi and his own union's German counterpart.

But it is not only Jorge Enrique's political awareness that has grown because of globalization; his political options and involvement have as well. When his father was young, the only real union was the one associat-

ed with the government. People could not become actively involved in an independent union that took part in the political system and use it to accomplish things, as Jorge Enrique's union is doing. Also new is the relationship between Jorge Enrique's union and the one in Germany. In addition, Jorge Enrique has been involved in monitoring local government elections; this was not unknown in the past, but it was much less common. Overall, we can say that the new political realities have offered opportunities for his greater involvement and have allowed Jorge Enrique some growth in his political awareness.

Part of the reason for his greater political involvement is the growth of the media in recent years, which was mentioned above. More media means more information, and information is crucial for political opening and involvement. Not only can Jorge Enrique and the other people in San Antonio now follow their favorite sports teams and the teams of other countries on the TV and radio, but they can also learn about political events in other parts of Mexico and all over the world in a way unimaginable not that long ago.

Religious Experience and Expression

La Virgen de Guadalupe: Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the Americas. Devotion to her is deeply rooted in Mexican culture.

The forces of migration and the widespread access to media have exposed the people in Jorge Enrique's village to new ideas and new ways of doing things in religious matters. Having noted this, in practice not much has changed in religious expression for him and the other people in San Antonio – nothing beyond the changes in the role of the laity that came as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

It is true that the laity have a greater role in the church than they did in the past. Jorge Enrique now sees lay people taking communion to the sick, something that only priests did before. It seems, too, that the church's authority in general is not as strong as it used to be; the lay people are more independent. They are certainly more knowledgeable; through the media they can now find out about the church in other parts of the world. However, despite these changes, which have been led by the institutional church, many of the area's religious traditions remain practically intact. Jorge Enrique and his family still go to Mass every Sunday.

JORGE ENRIQUE'S MEANINGS AND VALUES AS REFLECTED IN HIS CHOICES

In the cultural analysis, we identified three major decisions that Jorge Enrique took throughout his life and which the narrator discussed with him. Of these decisions, we chose to focus on the most recent one. This decision best reflects a more mature Jorge Enrique and more recent global economic forces acting on his life: it was his refusal to accept a liquidation payment and instead becoming more active in the labor union.

Below we analyze this decision and action using the methodology and template we presented in Chapter 4, p. 78ff., “*Research Methodology – Phase II: Finding the Protagonists’ Meanings and Values.*” (The questions template appears on p. 87.) Our analysis was reviewed by the narrator, but could not be verified with Jorge Enrique.

Action: Jorge Enrique refuses to accept a liquidation settlement and increases his participation in the union activities when Euzkadi’s management closes the factory.

A. What can we infer goes on within Jorge Enrique as he experiences the new economy and moves on to decide to take this action? What questions may Jorge Enrique have been raising and what answers seem consistent with reaching that decision? What feelings might be involved? (Note: This refers to the stages of consciousness, from experiencing to deciding; see Chapter 4, p. 88ff.)

Jorge Enrique first *experiences* apprehension about losing his job when he reads the newspapers’ report that jobs will be lost at Euzkadi and when he learns that the Goodyear plant in another state has been closed. He also hears the reports from the union negotiators who work to prevent the loss of jobs at Euzkadi. Finally, the apprehension becomes a reality when he hears directly: management announces that the factory will be closed for lack of an agreement with the labor union. His initial apprehension develops into fear, anger, and anxiety about how he would make a living with the closing of the factory. Memories of his father losing his job with a plant that never reopened are still fresh in his mind. He feels some comfort in the fact that he has an entry visa to work in the U.S.

Jorge Enrique had advance warning about the plant closing, but he is still shocked and needs to figure out what is happening. Why would management do this? Is it just greed? Or do they have some grounds? Can they get away with causing so many people to lose their jobs? Can the un-

ion still do something? Is there a legal recourse available? Can he and his family subsist on his small savings and his wife's income from the little retail store? Would another good job be available in El Salto? Would he find work if he went back to the U.S.? What are other workers doing? In answering these questions himself, he develops an *understanding* of his employment predicament.

After much pondering of these questions and similar ones, Jorge Enrique reaches some conclusions. He is angry as he *judges the facts*, as he knows them, and concludes that the primary responsibility for him losing his job lies with management and that the liquidation settlement they are offering is grossly inadequate. He concedes that management's allegations about employees' poor performance might be true with some employees who possibly need disciplinary action. But the magnitude of the problem does not justify closing the plant. That, he thinks, is totally unfair. He believes it so unfair that it makes sense to him when the union says that there is legal recourse for them to follow. Finding another good job in El Salto is out of the question. Euzkadi was the best. After checking his finances, he also concludes that he and his family can get by, at least for a while, with his savings and his wife's little store. A call to his uncle in Los Angeles also provides another safety net with the report of a lot of work available there.

He now has conflicting feelings about how to reach the best decision. He could forget the whole thing, accept the liquidation payment, and go to work in the U.S. That path would produce the most money, but it would mean a separation from the family, doing a type of work he does not like, and letting the Euzkadi management win the day. He could accept the liquidation money and stay in El Salto, but it would be hard to find another job that paid much money. Also, it would let management get away with closing the factory. Finally, he could refuse the liquidation, become more active with the union, and make do with his savings and his wife's store revenues. Financially this choice would be difficult, but it would keep the family together. This path also would make it possible to stand by in case the factory reopened – which would be the fair thing for management to do, in Jorge Enrique's view. Justice for him and the other workers would be done if this happened, or if at least a higher liquidation compensation could be gained.

He hears conflicting views from the people close to him. His family in Mexico wants him to stay with them and is willing to put up with the financial sacrifices that might be necessary. But his relatives in Los Angeles

and San Antonio believe that the smart thing to do is migrate to the U.S. to work there. Other Euzkadi employees who have already accepted the liquidation settlement believe that holding out for a better settlement is not worth it. Many people in town agree with them. Perhaps they believe that confronting Euzkadi's management would only result in severe retaliation from management at Euzkadi and other companies in El Salto.

Jorge Enrique is still angry but, after much deliberation, his love for his family, supported by his religious and sacramental life, tip the scale on which he weighs his alternatives: he makes a *judgment of value*. He *judges* that the most worthwhile (valuable) course of action is to keep the family together; going to work to the U.S. would be too painful for him and his family. He also feels that the unfairness of the plant closing needs to be addressed. He *decides* to stay in Mexico and stand firm and collaborate with the labor union to help confront management and get his job back or a better liquidation deal. He is aware he might have to revisit the choice of going to work in the U.S. if the union fails; however, if the union is successful the current income sacrifice might well be worth it economically.

B. What values appear to drive Jorge Enrique's decision? What are the good things that he seeks? (Note: This refers to the scale of values; see Chapter 4, p. 95ff.)

A very important force driving Jorge Enrique's decision to try to preserve his old job is his desire to secure this source of livelihood for himself and his family, his *vital values* – his need for food, shelter, etc. But he does not want just any job; he wants a good job. The value that he places on his job is a *social value* that helps him generate income to support his and his family's basic needs. Jorge Enrique's factory job also provides meaning, defining what he is: a worker in his village, a *cultural value*. Working at the company that pays the best, being "a tire man," confers a higher status than other jobs available to him. His job at the tire plant is a source of dignity as a Mexican worker. This dignity, together with the unfairness he perceives in management's decision to close the plant, are important *moral values* that guide his decision. (As time working with the union passes, he will become concerned as well with justice not only for himself but also for the other union members.) Because of the importance of these moral values to him, he is willing to challenge the order of society, *social and cultural values*, and protest management's actions. But on top of all these values reigns Jorge Enrique's love for his family and his religious faith. Family and religion are major sources of meaning in his life (*cultural values*); but beyond providing meaning, love for his family and a sense of reliance

on God guide him. This is the *ultimate value* and context in which he reaches his decision to refuse the liquidation settlement and, instead, increases his participation in union activities.

C. How does Jorge Enrique's new knowledge and decision change the horizon of meanings in his world?

Once Jorge Enrique decides to become a union activist, there is a big change in the way he views his world; i.e., his stance – his horizon. Although he still goes to the plant every day, his world has changed. He has decided to throw his economic lot in with the union. He begins to see management and the union in a new way. Management is no longer a benign source of employment, and the union begins to be much more than a useful tool to get a good salary. Now management is to be opposed, and the union starts to be a group of men with whom he is in solidarity. He is now willing to rely on the political power of the union to confront the power structures of business and government in his society. He has also tested how important it is to him to be close to the family that he loves. The family-separation hurdle to migrate is much higher now than it was a few years earlier.

D. Given Jorge Enrique's new horizon of meanings, what can we infer goes on within him as he moves to implement his decision? What questions may he have been trying to answer as he puts his decision into action? What values of Jorge Enrique are engaged in this implementation? (Note: This refers to the stages of consciousness, from deciding to acting; see Chapter 4, p. 90ff.)

His new point of view, or horizon, and the values that shaped it, will guide him as he implements the decision and adapts his world. Having decided to refuse the liquidation settlement and instead become more active with the union, Jorge Enrique first must confront the realities associated with his decision. Does he really want to implement it? Can he truly see himself as a labor union activist? Can he accept making ends meet without a regular income for his work? Is he prepared to risk not ever being offered another job in El Salto because of his union activism? He is still angry with management and apprehensive about the consequences of his decision. Nonetheless, his actions indicate that his ultimate values lead him to answer in the affirmative. In fact, he judges it *worthwhile* to put his decision into action and he takes responsibility for the consequences.

He seems to be at peace with his decision; it is consistent with his *ultimate values* of love for his family and his *moral values* of dignity and justice.

Jorge Enrique indeed wants to be a union activist, at least until there is a resolution to the Euzkadi situation. But he feels the stress caused by the fact that being a union activist has a different meaning in the village than holding a regular job does. Being a union activist is less valued. Does he really want to be associated with this way of being in the village? Does this mean that he is prepared for this bigger involvement with the union? His actions indicate that he answers positively and he appears to have found these adjustments *meaningful* to his way of life. This implies adjustments in his *cultural values*. As a union activist, his “work” at the plant, although not as an employee, will involve much more interaction than before in meetings and joint decision-making with the other union members. Is he prepared to change these relationships? In addition, Jorge Enrique will be depending on his wife’s store (and his parents’ restaurant) for the family’s income, and he will find himself with more free time at home when the children are around. These are nontraditional roles for men in his society, dominated as it is by *machismo*. How will he handle this situation? Is it OK to help in the store and with the children? This requires adjustments in both his *cultural and social values*. The values guiding his decision now lead to a new, very different, *understanding* of his work environment and the traditional economic relationship between man and wife in Mexico. As Jorge Enrique begins to *act* as a union activist, he *experiences* his world in a new way. The meanings and values of his world have been changed as he has changed the activities and experiences of his day. Family, village, management, and union mean new relationships; in the process he has also altered what he considers good in these relationships.

E. Do we detect changes in the relative weights Jorge Enrique now places on different values within a given level of values and among different levels of values? Does Jorge Enrique seem comfortable with his decision and action? (Note: This refers to the tensions within and among the levels of values; see Chapter 4, p. 102ff.)

We can see the shifts in the weight that Jorge Enrique places among different levels of values more clearly by comparing his decision to become a union activist with earlier decisions of his. We can compare the current decision with the decisions to migrate to the U.S., the first time for the adventure and the money, and later on to save money in order to buy a *pase* to the labor union. His private interests and economic goals heavily drove the earlier decisions: it was the income he expected to generate in the U.S. In contrast, in the current decision his religious values and his love for his family carry a heavier weight. His *ultimate values* inform

his *moral values* and prevail over the *social value* associated with the income consequences of deciding to become a union activist. His sacrifice of income also implies a lower weight for his *vital values*, which are supported by that income. It is true that if the union protest is successful this decision may also provide high income if the plant reopens or there is a much larger settlement. But there is high uncertainty as to whether that would be the final outcome. Jorge Enrique is placing more weight on his *religious and moral values than on his social and vital values*. He is doing what is right for the family he loves. His *social and vital values* will have to suffer as his income is reduced, at least for the time being. He is also putting less weight on the *cultural values* of what his village considers to be the best job for him and for his proper role as a man in his society. Not having the tire company job, it would be preferable, culturally, to go to the U.S. to work, as many others – including Jorge Enrique – have done in the past. Instead, he chose to become a union activist and a homemaker.

The changes in the relative weights given to different levels of values also demand adjustments in Jorge Enrique's values within each level. *Within moral values*, there is an adjustment, as these values now include not only what is right for him and his family but also extend to justice for other employees. In Jorge Enrique's anger there is a sense of the injustice of closing the factory and offering only a meager compensation. In rejecting management's actions, and joining forces with the activist union, Jorge Enrique develops a better understanding of the needs of others in the union who are in a similar situation. He adds justice for others, and care for the wellbeing of the group, to his concern for his family. *Within cultural values*, there is greater significance in the meaning the labor union has for him. In the past, the union and its leaders were primarily a mechanism for Jorge Enrique to address his economic needs. Now it is a social institution in which he is proud to participate to achieve common goals. In the domestic area, Jorge Enrique now also places less importance on the traditional machismo, as he spends more time helping with domestic chores and has increased financial dependence on his wife. *Within his social values* there is a shift in how he values the labor union and management as mechanisms to earn a living. He is now willing to work with the union, not just call on them for assistance. In the process, he has also assumed a more antagonistic position towards management. Finally, *within vital values*, there must be a rearrangement of what he considers good to satisfy his own and his family's needs with a reduced income. Jorge Enrique seems comfortable with his decision and action. He wishes life were as it was

before when he was working at the tire company, but he believes he is doing the right thing and he acts in relative freedom.

RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

Mexico's Economic Globalization and Jorge Enrique

Jorge Enrique experiences the impact of trade liberalization most directly when he loses his job. The plant where he worked is closed, alleging it cannot compete with the now cheaper imports from Korea. Trade liberalization has had both positive and negative effects on Jorge Enrique and El Salto. They benefited when new plants financed with foreign money invested in the area, as when Continental Tire bought Euzkadi. But they suffered when local factories had to close because they weren't competitive with imports and people lost their jobs. This happened with the textile plant where Jorge Enrique's father worked, as well as with Euzkadi.

In the case of Euzkadi there is litigation underway and we do not know what concessions management asked labor to make, or what the union was prepared to agree to. Nor do we know what other inefficiencies, besides the alleged high labor cost, exist there that management is not addressing. However, we do know that Continental Tire has another tire factory in Mexico that still is working. Is the Euzkadi union a bit too intransigent? Is management too callous about the effects on employees of shutting down the plant? We do not know the answers to any of these questions. But taking management's allegations at face value, here is one of the realities of liberalizing trade: more foreign competition will ensue and some domestic plants will not be able to survive. This might well be the case with Euzkadi!

International competition improves the efficiency of local production by shifting it to what it can do best and importing what other countries do best. But what about Jorge Enrique and the other workers at Euzkadi? What provisions are made for these people – just the hope that they find another job, probably at lower wages and benefits? The job at Euzkadi was the highest-paid job Jorge Enrique ever had and he does not have any special trade skill. That might be the cruel reality. But does it have to be that way? Jorge Enrique and the other union members have thought of the possibility that the company might abandon the plant and let the un-

ion run it for its own benefit. But who is going to teach these workers how to manage a tire production factory?

In the case of Jorge Enrique, from a purely economic point of view there is an alternative open to him for finding a job relatively easily: he possesses an entry visa to the U.S. But he never liked the jobs that he could find there – even when they paid well. In addition, migration, even in his circumstances, has a very high cost in terms of broken family ties and separation from the familiar culture.

Getting to Know Jorge Enrique: Our Journey

The development of the narrative and its cultural analysis led us to experience Jorge Enrique in two contrasting modes. On the one hand, we could see him as the victim of global economic forces (and perhaps callous management) that have closed the tire factory where he used to work. Working there was a dream. Now that dream had been broken and his economic future was in doubt. On the other hand, we could also see Jorge Enrique as a decisive person who does not exhibit the passivity of a victim. He repeatedly assesses his options, reaches new decisions, and acts – even if only with the sophistication of somebody who can act merely to keep his options open. As a decisive person, we thought that Jorge Enrique’s primary driving force was having what he considers “a good job,” with the associated income, working conditions, and material life. However, we also recognized that this drive was qualified by his love and desire to be with his family – factors in his decision not to migrate to the U.S., at least not yet.

As we looked closer into Jorge Enrique’s decision-making process and motivations, we learned more about what he considers to be “a good job.” We came to understand that “a good job” to him is determined not only by the nature of the job and what it pays – social and vital values – but also by what his Mexican culture as lived in the village values. Being a “tire man” is considered to have a higher social status, has more dignity, than being a union man or a *milusos* in the U.S. It is not just money and working hours that define a good job for Jorge Enrique. Cultural and moral values are also important, maybe even more so.

The exercise of looking at the world through Jorge Enrique’s eyes, within the context of his scale of values, threw new light especially on the importance to him of his religion and associated values. The narrator had

stressed the importance of religion to Jorge Enrique, but we had not connected this point with Jorge Enrique as a decision maker. We had seen the expression of religious values manifested in the culture of Sunday Masses, baptisms, marriages, and other religious celebrations. But we tended to see these expressions primarily at a cultural level – as what everybody does in the village. Now we could see that Jorge Enrique’s faith in a paternal and loving God shapes everything for him. And if religious faith is the bedrock of his life, the love he feels for his family and the strong bonds he has with them are its best manifestation. This love is a strong force behind his decisions. The traditional Mexican family remains strong in Jorge Enrique’s life. At the point of deciding, Jorge Enrique might have chosen to think only of himself, but he doesn’t. In his most recent decisions, if not when he was younger and first came to the U.S., he chooses what is best for the family. What Jorge Enrique finds valuable is grounded in his strong religious faith and his love of family. These are the ultimate values that provide the horizon that guides his decisions. These values help him reach judgments in his new world and help him understand and experience his new reality as he becomes a union activist and waits for a better solution to his situation.

By identifying the primacy of Jorge Enrique’s religious and moral values, we came to a better understanding of how he has expanded his concept of justice and adapted his cultural values. Originally, as he refuses management’s settlement offer and appeals to the union, he seeks justice for himself. But as he implements his decision this justice is now broadened to include the other activists remaining in the union. In the broadening of his community, Jorge Enrique’s righteous anger has also broadened. The frustration of dealing with a powerful multinational company and a political system that appears to be partial to business has created a real anger and desire for justice in Jorge Enrique. His moral/personal values lead him to channel this anger into the union’s confrontation with the company’s management. He now extends the love of God he perceives in his religious values to a broader group of people: his union co-participants. We began to see that his trust in God also helps him find what is good in his new predicament, as in his new social relationships within the union and the greater amount of time he can spend with his children. In the process, he adapts how he lives his values within his culture and social relationships. The traditional *machismo* seems to have a lesser hold on him and he becomes more active in asserting his worker’s rights instead of just relying on the union, *el responsable*.

In our new understanding of Jorge Enrique, we recognize him as able to go beyond his traditional Mexican culture – the culture as lived in *el rancho* of San Antonio with its exposure to the nearby industrial zone and the migratory experiences of the many people who move between Mexico and the U.S. Guided by his values, he blends elements from *el rancho* culture with the new elements of his changing, globalized world. He is capable of judging the values of both cultures, distinguishing among them, and deciding what seems to him to be the best course of action. He adapts his world to conform to his new understanding of his world. He becomes an active participant in how he shapes his new world. He takes responsibility for his decisions as he puts them into action. His values create something new that is good because he becomes a more responsible agent of development, even as his external circumstances deteriorate.

Jorge Enrique's personal development, however, is fraught with underlying tensions whose resolution he seems to leave in God's hands. He knows he can always go to the U.S. to work and make more money than he could at home – but it would entail leaving his family. As he volunteers with the union and waits for the tire company's fate to be decided, he keeps his options open. It could be said that this decision puts his life in abeyance. But his decision can also be seen as his way of living out his faith, his complete trust in God. He is open to either migrating to the U.S. or staying: "What God may decide." He has a spontaneous hope in God and he is not worried. He searches for what is good and this imparts a new meaning to his life as he confronts the negative impact of the forces of the global economy on his own life.