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Governing Poverty Amidst Plenty:  
Philanthropic Investments and the California Dream

by

Erica L. Kohl

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

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Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Harley Shaiken, Chair

Professor John Hurst

Professor Ananya Roy

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Governing Poverty Amidst Plenty: Philanthropic Investments and the California  
Dream

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by Erica L. Kohl

## Abstract

### Governing Poverty Amidst Plenty: Philanthropic Investments and the California Dream

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Described as the ‘New Appalachia,’ California’s Central Valley ranks number one on the Brookings Institution’s American poverty list. In the past two years newspapers ranging from the Los Angeles Times to the Washington Post ran headline stories featuring the Central Valley’s dependence on large-scale agriculture and its resulting income stagnation, ‘brain drain’, and deepening poverty and insecurity in isolated migrant farmworker settlements across the region. This dissertation is a historical study of philanthropic interventions into migrant farmworker poverty across California's Central Valley from the 1960’s Farm Worker Movement to the present. It explores the ways in which foundation driven programs to address migrant poverty amidst great agricultural wealth manage or ‘govern’ the work of farmworker organizers and institutions across the region.

Over the past ten years an unprecedented number of private foundation grants have been made to farmworker organizations across California's Central Valley. While philanthropic investments in migrant institutions have not significantly altered the terrain of farmworker organizing, they have promoted institutional arrangements and theoretical frameworks that contain the work of farmworker organizations and advocates. In this dissertation I specifically interrogate how processes of professionalization and ‘participatory’ ideas promoted through foundations such as self-help, community development, immigrant integration, civic participation, and asset-based community development are negotiated by institutional ‘grantees,’ and

ultimately structure the ways in which historic farm worker movement organizations build institutions and organizing strategies. Through an analysis of archival data and interviews with historic movement leaders and current foundation and nonprofit staff, this dissertation shows how, while philanthropic investments in farmworker communities are greater than ever, regional program managers are more reluctant to address the problems faced by farmworkers such as pesticides poisoning, low wages, and substandard health and housing conditions. The specific 'win-win' asset based approach popular with the most recent foundation initiatives facilitates processes that identify the places where growers and workers can work together, avoiding problem-based causes where growers' economic interests may be challenged. Operating under the 'win-win' model, at a time when growers and workers alike are suffering from the financial crisis and drought, advocates find themselves further away from addressing the structural issues of a farm labor system that relies on constant streams of migrant workers from poor pueblos in Mexico.

This dissertation contributes to the emerging body of scholarship on philanthropy and social change by complicating arguments that either promote foundations as positive agents of social progress or critique them as monolithic imperialist institutions with clear agendas of co-optation and control. In complicating theories of social control and cooptation, my intention is not to defend private grant making foundations as effective agents of social movements or even to disagree with the ultimate dilution of organizing agendas that foundation grants often initiate. My aim is to encourage scholars and activists to confront the current paradigm where foundations are viewed as unified institutions of power with clearly articulated political agendas of which we have little understanding and therefore no ability to change. Throughout the dissertation, I do this by showing how decisions made between funders and movement leaders are, while not without consequences, often multi-layered and contingent, as opposed to being driven by a single political agenda of cooptation and repression as is now commonly argued. This is the first scholarly work on California foundations, and their relationship to farmworker institutions.

## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation, and the future book, to two important people in my life. While many people have provided critical support and feedback throughout this journey, it has been my husband Jose and my father Herb that made it possible.

Throughout my life my father, Herb, has taught me to speak my heart, to write about complex problems plainly, and to find a way to change the world by being both an observer and an actor. Most of all he taught me that even though it may be hard, and may come with consequences, that taking risks, following my dreams and having the courage to challenge what I see as wrong, will shape my life's work. Through the process of researching and writing this dissertation I have come closer in mind and spirit to my father, a life long storyteller and provocateur.

I also dedicate this work to my beautiful and endlessly supportive husband, Jose. Ten years ago when I decided to go down the road of becoming a scholar I was lucky to happen upon a partnership with Jose, an artist and a man with an enormous heart, a deep understanding for the creative process - of uncovering meaning and insight by getting ones hands dirty-, and a bottomless well of patience and belief in my voice. I could not have found a more fitting partner in life. The financial, childcare, and emotional support Jose has provided me throughout this journey only scratch the surface of his generosity. It is his honesty, positive spirit, creative mind, and amazement with the written word that kept me going when I found it hard to see the whole through all the parts.

One day last summer Herb and Jose ganged up on me and said, "Now is the time. Go to Point Arena and just get-it-done!" Thank you. I did.

## Acknowledgements

Many generous people and organizations contributed to this project. First, I thank my family for their support, curiosity, and belief in my ability to tell this complicated story. My mother and father, who have humored my misuse of commas and semicolons for years, were particularly helpful with proof reading and copy editing of the entire document. I am also grateful to my Social and Cultural Studies cohort of eight strong and brilliant women who for the past seven years pushed me to ask the right questions and think critically about my arguments and conclusions. Special thanks to Greta Kirshenbaum and Ligaya Domingo for their writing companionship and for understanding the importance yet also the challenges that come with conducting research that is deeply connected to one's life and work. Ingrid Seyer-Ochi and Gillian Hart were also helpful in guiding me in the initial stages of shaping a research project. I gained excellent feedback from my dissertation committee members, Harley Shaiken, John Hurst and Ananya Roy. It was John's urging to investigate the effects of philanthropic investments over time, and not just for one organization or case study, that led me down the path of archival research. Digging into the United Farm Workers of America's archives turned out to be perhaps the most fruitful and rewarding part of my research. Harley always provided a reality check, reminding me that 'capitalism is not going end tomorrow' and that therefore any theorization needs to be grounded in the reality of our times. His knowledge of the broader context in which the United Farm Workers of America rose and struggled was also appreciated in grounding my research in the field of labor history. I cannot find enough words to thank Ananya Roy. In Ananya I found a kindred spirit. Her love of ideas, her comfortableness with contradictions and paradoxes, her interest in both broader structural patterns and the specific people who try to reinforce or change them, and her deep and critical reading kept me inspired and connected to my research and writing process. All three of my advisors believed in my work and pushed me to create a bigger, more complex project every step of the way. They are models for working within academia without losing sight of the everyday struggles of people, of politics, and action.

Important mentors outside of the university include Craig McGarvey, Myrna Martinez-Nateras, and Dr. Helen Lewis. It was my work with Craig at the James Irvine Foundation that first inspired this research project. During my time with Irvine, Craig took me under his wing and opened my eyes to the

politics of philanthropy and the specific strategies, successes and missteps made by professionals attempting to use private wealth as a tool for addressing societal inequity. Craig's honest struggle with the power imbalance inherent in philanthropic giving was the window through which I entered this project. Myrna is another person who has provided an incredible amount of insight and support. Having together experienced the transformation of the Pan Valley Institute as the result of interest and investment from private foundations, we engaged in many deeply informative conversations throughout the course of my research. We both know that foundation-funding can simultaneously bring amazing opportunity and produce certain limits and vulnerabilities. We have not yet come to any conclusions about what this ultimately means for grassroots popular education and social change organizations. I worked with Dr. Helen Lewis while an intern at the Highlander Research and Education Center and in Ivanhoe, Virginia, in 1989. I found my life role model in Helen, a skillful popular educator, radical scholar, and woman with deep ties to both her home region and the world. Helen taught me to embrace the joys and the contradictions that come with working between scholarship and practice.

I would also like to thank the people that I interviewed, shadowed, or met with during my research project. Hopefully my writing will help to communicate the inequitable and often tenuous relationship between small community action organizations and private foundations that many 'grantees' find it difficult to publically speak of. The foundation and nonprofit professionals interviewed are the real narrators of this story and their combined wisdom is hopefully found in these pages.

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## Preface

I begin this story of California's Central Valley in a small coalmining town in Appalachia – two rural regions defined by stark poverty in the midst of great wealth. Both regions have been historically dominated by corporate industry reliant on abundant natural resources and cheap labor.

In the fall of 1988 I moved to Ivanhoe, Virginia to live and work with Maxine Waller, a charismatic women caught up in the struggle to save her de-industrializing coalmining town. Alerted to the proposed sale of Ivanhoe's industrial land in the obituary section of a local paper, Maxine, the wife of a former coalminer and Union Carbide worker, launched a campaign to prevent the sale, initially hoping that, if saved, the town might attract new industry. Many local women believed that the obituary was a sign from god, answering a religious curse put on Ivanhoe by a traveling Preacher 'Sheffey' in the 1930s. Many coalminers believed that the land would be sold because they did not work hard enough, that 'better' workers attracted the coal company and Union Carbide to move elsewhere. Despite their original doubts a cadre of local women (and a few men) joined Maxine, prevented the sale of the land, and embarked on an educational and organizing campaign to plan for the redevelopment of Ivanhoe.

With conviction that poor people in an unrecognized place could overcome the destruction wrought by big industry and globalization, Maxine pushed and prodded county officials, development 'experts', and anyone who told her that her town's dreams were not possible. I was changed by this brilliant, rebellious woman who refused to be what everyone told her to be, and by a community that pulled together to analyze a complex situation, altering a story that told them to be guilty agents in their own demise. As a participant in Ivanhoe's people's economics classes I saw locals begin to understand the world around them, becoming active participants in planning for a future they shared. Coal miners and their wives studied and received high school diplomas, groups of women organized feminist Bible studies classes, micro-enterprises were formed in an attempt to direct the town's economic future, a local history book was published that won the Appalachian book award, plays were performed, a volunteer program was initiated to fix porches, roofs, and to identify future community development problems and plans – on their own terms. Living and working in Ivanhoe

made me passionate about adult education and organizing that is directed by poor people and not defined by outside agencies, institutions, or funding requirements.

Since this formative experience, I have not come across a community development or organizing project so self directed, so willing to take risks and, most of all, so unconcerned with the constant chase for private foundation funding. While working within the nonprofit sector I have been continually struck by the limitations to organizing and development projects that rely on private philanthropy. Ivanhoe, of course, is not immune. Nearly two decades after launching her campaign to retrieve Ivanhoe's fate from the obituary section, Maxine is now worn out by the endless speeches, appearances, and workshops she is invited to attend on behalf of grant giving foundations and community development agencies mystified by the Ivanhoe story. After many failed attempts at micro-enterprise and 'eco-development' Ivanhoe, with funding from private foundations, was only able to maintain the adult education GED courses and a volunteer program for college students to come fix porches in Ivanhoe. There are still no jobs. Maxine was turned into the 'expert', no longer available to move within an increasingly globalized context; the organizing campaign turned into a 'replicable program,' unable to change with the times or to confront the larger economic forces it set out to address.

While conducting research on the War on Poverty programs in Appalachia I came to understand that similar processes of institutionalization and co-optation subsumed much of the organizing taking fire across urban American and the rural south in the 1960's. Angry and rebellious men and women, like Maxine, were enticed into positions as program managers, community developers, or social service providers through the War on Poverty's Community Action Projects. One of the ways in which The War on Poverty was able to 'manage' the civil rights movement was by translating the movement language of 'participatory' community problem solving and 'empowerment' into federally funded programs and institutions. Only the part that really mattered, the critical structural analysis and community organizing was missing. Ultimately, when faced with serious demands for structural change, the War on Poverty's 'participatory' rhetoric revealed itself as actually representing an age old 'culture of poverty' ideology that held poor people accountable for their own problems and required individual and family training, services, and counseling rather than organizing or action. For example, two decades before Maxine began

organizing in Ivanhoe, the War on Poverty's Appalachian Volunteers entered mountain communities to help poor coal mining families 'participate' in improving conditions in the coal camps and hollers, yet insisted that fixing porches and patching roofs was a better way to participate than fighting for health care to cover black lung disease or against strip mining practices across the region (Kohl 1991).

My obsession with the double (or multiple) meanings of 'participatory development' and the struggles over who defines what this means in different places and times, to what ends, and ultimately accountable to whom, deepened throughout the 1990's. Working in the non-profit sector throughout the 1990's I experienced a wide range of politically ambiguous 'participatory' projects. 'Participation' and 'empowerment' were again the *new* mantra –this time representing an 'asset based', 'community visioning', 'relationship building' and 'collaborative planning' approach to solving problems that the public sector was increasingly unavailable to address. This trend is no isolated coincidence. During the neoliberal restructuring of the late 1980's and early 1990's, when international financial institutions were widely critiqued for top down structural adjustment policies, 'participatory' self-help and 'empowerment' programs became widely popular with the World Bank and international development agencies (Peet 2003, Weber 2002). It has been argued that empowerment and participatory approaches to poverty alleviation served to placate the rising challenges to the neoliberal structural adjustment policies, while simultaneously allowing international finance and policy institutions to deepen their relationships with poor regions throughout the world (Weber 2002).

While working in the nonprofit sector in the 1990's, I was introduced to the staggering network of private grant making foundations sponsoring and oftentimes conceptualizing the new round of domestic participatory development initiatives. Alongside participatory programs, private foundations also funded a cadre of public intellectuals to publish books promoting the virtues of participatory or 'facilitative' leadership. I came across the writing of Tom Peters, corporate management guru, whose facilitative doctrines appeared to me as an obvious appropriation of the radical, anti-establishment organizing approaches of the 1960's. Other examples of this kind of literature include Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* (1995) that spells out how to be an effective leader by 'Challenging the Process', "Inspiring a Shared Vision", and 'Enabling Others to Act', Bennis' *Organizing Genius* (1996), or Henton's *Grassroots*

*Leaders for a New Economy* (1997) - all of which rearticulate (not necessarily wittingly) the methods, techniques, and language of popular education, radical social movements and grassroots community organizing and development, but for the purpose of mainstream 'entrepreneurial' civic leadership. During this time, I began to ask why 'participatory' and 'civic engagement' approaches rose to dominance in the United States? Was the call for community engagement an attempt to fill in the gaps of a shrinking welfare state? Did business leaders seek to legitimize development projects during economic booms through processes of public feedback? Or did a rapidly growing base of nonprofit advocacy organizations spur a revival of the 1960's spirit of community action?

Part of the answer to my questions about why 'participation,' 'why now' and on behalf of whose interests came from my experiences working with The James Irvine Foundation. While working as a full time consultant with the James Irvine Foundation's Civic Culture Program (1999-2003) I learned how the history of co-optation and institutionalization played out for the California Farm Worker Movement of the 1960's and '70s. In keeping with the civil rights struggles across the country, many organizers and leaders from the Chicano and farm worker movements slowly became incorporated into the Central Valley's War on Poverty era Community Action Programs. Others later formed their own 501c3 organizations to qualify for the 1986 IRCA legislation's federal funding to provide ESL and citizenship adult education services. Today old time organizers, originally motivated by a movement to gain labor and citizenship rights and improvements on squatter style farmworker housing and living conditions, are keenly aware of what has been lost as they develop non-threatening service or 'civic participation' programs in keeping with current funding priorities and language. I learned how philanthropic investments aimed at reviving and reconnecting social movement organizations across a region can have the opposite effect as grantees become increasingly accountable to private foundations (and their political limitations) and not to movement goals or alliances. This experience showed me how ideas can be used differently by divergent political actors and are negotiated in a struggle to give purpose, and even power, to those who wield them. I learned from my own professional experience that the ideas and institutional structures that private foundations re-appropriate and celebrate are often made unrecognizable from their original meaning and divorced from their political histories.

I tell these stories of the struggle over definitions of ‘participatory’ community development and action because the current relationship between community organizing and private philanthropy cannot be understood outside of the context of the movements and struggles of the past, the ways in which participation has been conceptualized and re-articulated and the ways in which the researcher, community development practitioner or consultant intersects with these processes. Through my experiences and research I came to understand that the struggle over participatory development and grassroots community organizing is never won or lost, never owned by those “in the struggle” or those “in power,” and that the lines between them are sometimes blurred. The drafters of the War on Poverty did not always have malicious intentions to rule when designing the largest public program in the United States since the Great Depression. Social movement leaders do not always hold unified visions or pure strategies of un-corrupted social change. Foundation staff, romanced by ideas of pluralist civic participation, do not always have malicious intentions of co-optation and control.

Born in 1968 to Depression Era parents who took on the values and principles of the social movement of the day, I learned how the dreams and hopes of one generation can be transformed and made unthinkable by the next; how social movement leaders, so powerful in their time, can find themselves wanting when faced with the antithesis of their ideas realized by a new generation or political regime. I saw how social movement institutions could valiantly succeed one day and face a crushing blow, using the very same strategy, the next. I personally witnessed how difficult the life of a social change agent is, how despite having brilliant intellect and astounding organizing skills many movement leaders are not strong enough to weather shifting allegiances, political climates, and economic relationships that redefine the terrain across eras.

One of the conflicted, sometimes victorious and sometimes tragic social movements I witnessed was the United Farm Workers’ movement. As a small child I remember joining the picket lines outside of a Berkeley, California Lucky’s grocery store, maybe in 1973, and understanding that we were protesting alongside the people who were hurt by the low wages and chemicals used to produce the grapes that Lucky’s sold. I remember sitting on a bale of hay at a farmworker rally at the Los Banos Country Fair Ground, in the Central Valley, watching the proud young college women and men who fled UC Berkeley to join the movement. I was moved by the

songs, the chants, the collective energy that taught me that anything is possible if oppressed people come together with strength and courage. Alongside the Farm Worker Movement, I grew up around words like freedom, equality, expression, power to the people, feminism, brown power, civil rights, and social justice. I also grew up understanding defeat and the collective realization of the era that ideas and action alone cannot necessarily change the world: I was born the year that Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were shot, and remember the challenges my parents faced in their struggles to change the public school system, the tragic losses and eventual death of Cesar Chavez. I graduated high school during the second term of president Ronald Reagan, and came of age during the first Bush administration.

The personal historical moments touched on in this preface deeply influenced my approach as a researcher, and provide a context for understanding the specific questions about the complex relationships between the ideas of participatory democracy, social movements, public and private funders, and processes of professionalization and institutionalization that drive this project. These experiences also give shape to the larger story of the relationship between private philanthropy and farm worker organizing across California's Central Valley.

## Introduction

Over the past ten years an unprecedented number of private foundation grants have been made to farmworker organizations across California's Central Valley, a region defined by deepening poverty amidst great agricultural wealth. While philanthropic investments have not significantly altered the terrain of farmworker organizing, they have promoted institutional arrangements and theoretical frameworks that contain the work of farmworker organizations and advocates. This dissertation is a historical study of philanthropic interventions into migrant farmworker poverty across California's Central Valley from the 1960's Farm Worker Movement to the present, and explores the ways in which foundation driven programs to address migrant poverty amidst great agricultural wealth manage or 'govern' the work of farmworker organizers and institutions across the region. I specifically interrogate how processes of professionalization and 'participatory' ideas promoted through foundations such as self-help, community development, immigrant integration, civic participation, and asset-based community development are negotiated by institutional 'grantees,' and ultimately structure the ways in which historic farmworker movement organizations build institutions and organizing strategies.

This dissertation provides a more nuanced look at the relationship between private philanthropy and social change than most studies on this topic. Most scholarship either proposes that philanthropy is a positive force of 'creative capitalism,' defined by social entrepreneurial projects accountable to a 'double bottom line' of making profit while doing good, and is the solution to growing inequality and global poverty (Clinton 2007, Gates 2008), or at the other end of the spectrum views private foundations as monolithic imperialist institutions run by a managerial elite set on destroying radical social movements (Arnove 1980, Roelofs 2003, Rodriguez 2004). The most recent wave of this critical scholarship was presented at the 2004 INCITE! Conference appropriately titled, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*. While many of these studies have broken new ground in understanding the opportunities and challenges of organizing through civil society, both the capitalist and the existing critical scholarship simplify processes of institutionalization and the transformation of social movement organizations over time. This dissertation makes a unique contribution to understanding the openings and limitations to addressing social and economic inequality through private philanthropy by revealing how the ideas, and the



institutional frameworks promoted by private foundations can at once open up space for social change, and contain or ‘govern’ movement organizations across a region.

This research also breaks new ground in understanding the specifically Californian context of private philanthropy and its deep ties to migrant organizations and the historic Farm Worker Movement. Like the literature on philanthropy and social change, several recently released books have chronicled the struggles of the United Farm Worker Movement from either a purely promotional or deeply critical perspective (Ganz 2008, Shaw 2008, Pawel 2009). None have explored how the very strategies, resource base, and leadership that gave rise to the movement were also deeply a part of its undoing. This study is primarily concerned with the contradictions and paradoxes negotiated by movement institutions and their funders that both give rise to, and unravel, social movements and advocacy organizations across shifting political terrains and historical moments.

### **Research Questions and Themes**

The general questions that frame this project revolve around the disconnect, and sometimes the alignment, between what funders, planners, and community development managers theorize and propose, and what farmworker organizers and advocates deem necessary in addressing enduring farmworker poverty and powerlessness. The main research questions that guide this project include:

1. How are the specific ideas and understandings of community improvement and social change promoted by public and private funders negotiated by social movement actors and institutions? Specifically this research asks how the ‘participatory’ ideas promoted through private foundations such as self-help, community development, immigrant integration, and civic participation shape the ways in which historic farm worker movement organizations built institutions and organizing strategies.
2. How have processes of professionalization and institutional development changed the nature of farmworker organizing across California’s Central Valley? Specifically, I am concerned with the not necessarily causal relationship between a decrease in farmworker organizing and the increase in institutional stability. This question concerns how the processes of professionalization and institution building promoted by private foundations

over time intersects with the current work of farm worker serving organizations

3. How have funding driven inter-agency relationships structured current organizing strategies and alliances across the Central Valley region. In particular, what are the opportunities and limitations to developing new organizing agendas to address the concerns of farm workers presented through the dominant philanthropic model of the ‘collaborative initiative’?

In other words, I set out to study how social movement actors and farmworker serving organizations accept, reject, and negotiate the ideas, institutional structures, and regional alliances promoted through public and private funding. The specific ideas and institutional arrangements most often concerned different iterations of the idea of participatory democracy and inter-agency collaboration. The limits and opportunities that these frames present in confronting inequality created and maintained through industrial agriculture are explored through three specific historical eras or moments, 1. The farmworker movement of the 1960’s and early 1970’s, 2. The gradual incorporation of social service non-profit organizations in the Central Valley, starting through the War on Poverty and continuing as the philanthropic sector expanded in the 1980’s and, 3. The proliferation of foundation funded collaborative initiatives in the mid to late 1990’s to the present. These moments are not mere historical markers but rather represent major shifts in the political and economic terrain across California’s Central Valley, the nation, and across the US-Mexico southern border that influenced the re-shaping of ‘participatory’ ideas of social change. Each version of participatory social change was born within a historical conjuncture that gave it tangible life. In broad brushstrokes (and further detailed in the body of each chapter), the civil rights and ethnic pride movements of the 1960’s gave life and legitimacy to funding community engagement in the emerging Farm Worker Movement; the globalization of agriculture, immigration reform, and the expansion of the nonprofit sector in the 1980’s gave rise to the shift from migrant worker to immigrant integration and civic participation programs; and the 1990’s-turn of the century scaled down welfare state, neoliberal political climate, and financial crisis gave way to a ‘win-win’ approach to inter-agency collaboration and helping farmworkers by helping growers increase profit. Within these moments, I explore the contest over who defines how development, organizing, or social change strategies are conceptualized and implemented and to what ends.

## **Governing Poverty Amidst Plenty**

Early on I began to think about these questions through the approach of grounded theory, postulating that a Gramscian understanding of hegemony and civil society would best explain the role of private philanthropy in social movements and community organizing. A Gramscian theorization of philanthropy (Arnove 1989, Roelofs 2003) asserts that foundation driven initiatives physically and ideologically re-organize regional alliances through monetarily driven partnerships and foundation promoted ideology that incorporates radical social change agendas through neutralized program frameworks. Gramsci's theory of hegemony posits that any dominant political system is maintained through both the state and a supportive, complex web of organizations and institutions in civil society (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999, Gramsci in Forgas 2000). These organizations and the various 'public intellectuals' that work within and across them produce consent through the production and communication of ideas that appear to make common sense. Ideas once conceived of as dissenting, such as 'empowerment' or 'community action' are neutralized and incorporated into new non-threatening ideologies and programs that take the place of more radical or confrontational approaches to social change. Through this general theory, I also proposed that while foundations manage and neutralize the organizing approaches of grantees there remains room for negotiation – as indicated by a 'doubleness' to understandings, relationships and strategies enacted by diverse groups involved in foundation programs across shifting social, political, and economic terrains in civil society.

While the Gramscian framework provides a generalized theory of social change and control it could not help me understand how specific ideas, practices, and institutional relationship actually work to shape organizing on the ground. Here Michel Foucault-inspired studies in 'governmentality' helped me think about the actual work that certain ideas and structures do in practice. The basic proposition of governmentality, that relations of power as expressed through ideas, institutions, discourses, or programs (as opposed to force, violence or direct threat) can alter the way people internalize how they should act (also described as 'the conduct of conduct' or as 'the way we act upon ourselves, Rose 1999), became more useful as I began to analyze data and the lasting implications of the 'governing' frames of each era. A relevant example of a study in 'governmentality' is Barbara Cruikshank's book *The Will to Empower* about how the concept of 'empowerment' was utilized

during the American War on Poverty as a form of governance. For Cruikshank the concept of empowerment is organized around a certain political rationality that promotes the autonomy and self-sufficiency of political subjects and that teaches people to internalize the importance of helping themselves, rather than mobilizing public support or protest. In this sense governmentality is the management of citizen action through a converging set of ideas and institutional structures and programs people come to believe in and desire in an attempt to become legitimate deserving citizens.

However, in many cases, I became frustrated with governmentality theory's limited ability to identify the contradictions, openings, or places where program frameworks or foundation theories of change do not work or 'stick' with the populations in which they are applied. This not 'sticking' of top down program prescriptions tended towards the norm, rather than the exception. I also found that program frameworks were often described and used in different, and often contradictory, ways by both foundation staff and movement leaders. Hence, I found 'governmentality' theory poorly suited to understanding the strategic negotiations of political actors such as social movement leaders, community organizers, and foundation professionals. I returned back to the more fluid political articulations of meaning and strategic allegiances a Gramscian frame allows. In this context, the classic works of LaClau and Mouffe (1993) and Stuart Hall (1980) and more recent post-colonial development scholars (Li 2000, Goldman 2005, Tsing 2005) and the ideas of negotiation, 'articulation', 'temporary fixes' and strategic alliances provided nuance to a theorization of the negotiation between private foundations the advocacy and activist organizations that they fund.

Building on Gramsci's work, Stuart Hall and scholars who appropriate his theorization of 'articulation' argue that certain positions, identities or interests are never fixed or complete but rather grow contingently, and often strategically, in the course of struggle. In this sense, programs framed by foundations may control grantees at one moment, yet they may also contain elements of alternatives to the dominant framework they represent, and they may be understood and used differently across the organizations and networks at different moments in time. These works helped me think about the 'political' negotiations involved in the broader project of social control and change. Sometimes explicitly and at other times without reference, a theoretical engagement with broadly defined post-Marxist theory is further explicated in each chapter.

While I began this research project pessimistic about the role of private foundations in social movements and inspired by the recent wave of post-Marxist scholarship on philanthropy and imperialism, such as *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (INCITE! 2007), some of my thinking has changed. Many of my worries and hypothesis have proven relatively accurate, yet I have also been surprised. Through interviews with leaders of the historic California Farm Worker Movement and archival research on the movement and its investors, I was surprised to find that private foundations played a critical and even sometimes risk-taking role in preparing farmworker communities for the social movements of the 1960's. I was also surprised to find that foundation leadership inspired the founding of many farmworker advocacy organizations that today, under duress from federal budget cuts and enduring poverty in farmworker communities, continue to work tirelessly in the shadows of a historic social movement.

In complicating theories of social control and cooptation, my intention is not to defend foundations as effective agents of social movements or even to disagree with the ultimate dilution of organizing agendas that foundation grants often initiate. The aim of my research is to encourage scholars and activists to confront the current paradigm where foundations are viewed as unified institutions of power with clearly articulated political agendas of which we have little understanding and therefore no ability to change. Throughout the dissertation, I do this by showing how decisions made between funders and movement leaders are, while not without consequences, often multi-layered and contingent, as opposed to being driven by a single political agenda of cooptation and repression as is now commonly argued.

Each chapter weaves together the three central themes, or stories, that reoccur throughout this dissertation. The first story is about California's Central Valley, today the poorest region in the United States. California's Central Valley, a region often excluded from the rest of California (Arax 2009) is a place where extreme poverty, lawless land and farming practices involving ongoing water battles and recruitment of undocumented low wage migrant labor, is often described as more like Appalachia than the rest of California. It is also home to a historic social movement whose aging leaders and established institutions, due to isolation and poor resources, have not come to embody the sophistication, transiency, and sometimes jadedness that many urban American social movement organizations have come to represent. The farm worker struggle and the Central Valley region provide a

fitting setting to examine how, against the odds, and in oftentimes less than ideal circumstances, social movement leaders and institutions continue to address enduring problems of migrant labor poverty, representation, and rights over the course of almost five decades.

Today the Central Valley is at once the richest agricultural region in the world and home to the poorest people living in the United States (Great Valley Center 1999, Brookings Institute 2008). The historic predominance of agriculture and the labor patterns it engendered established a large population of migrant farm workers. Racialized immigration, land ownership and labor policies and practices frustrated immigrant and migrant efforts to own land, marry, educate children, and participate in political life. These practices and patterns fostered the present circumstance of poverty in the midst of wealth –many of which are maintained and re-enacted today. Since, and perhaps long before, the California Gold Rush this 450-mile long valley basin has been made and remade through struggles over minerals, water, farmable land, and the multiple socio-economic, cultural and political stakes entailed -including the historic farm worker organizing movement led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in the 1960's. It is a place produced by people, capital, transportation, communication, agricultural and labor patterns that stretch far beyond the Coastal and Sierra mountain ranges that physically frame the region. These intersecting relationships of people, capital, technology, and social movements across the Valley and over time can be understood as “fields of power” (Roy 2003) or “power-geometries”, a complex web of social relations “full of power and symbolism . . . of domination and subordination, of solidarity, and cooperation” (Massey 1994: 265). A fluid conception of place as produced by unstable relationships that stretch beyond localized and static boundaries helps explain how geographically absent actors, like grant making foundations, national think tanks and media networks, and national social movements, plays a role in constituting power dynamics -how people, ideas, and resources are organized and re-organized over time.

During the mid-1990's economic boom, with increased budgets and output requirements California foundations began to search for new regions to fund. Many turned to the Central Valley, a region with existing non-profit organizations and obvious needs. Just as post 9-11 fear tactics and financial downsizing closed the door on many immigrant oriented philanthropic initiatives across the region, the disaster of Hurricane Katrina opened a new window of interest in addressing poverty in American cities and regions. A

Brookings Institution report (October 2005), and Alan Berube's *Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America* (2005) described California's Central Valley as the 'New Appalachia,' ranking number one on their American poverty lists. Picking up the Brookings Institutions report, newspapers ranging from the LA Times, to the Fresno Bee, to the Washington Post ran headline stories featuring the Central Valley's dependence on large-scale agriculture and its resulting income stagnation, 'brain drain', and isolated poor migrant farmworker settlements (See, Fresno Bee, "Brookings Institute report another public black eye for Fresno" 12/5/05). It is a place now receiving much attention, yet not much action towards addressing the region's growing poverty. At a 2005 UC Berkeley Conference on the state of the Central Valley past director of the Great Valley Center, Carol Whiteside, reflected on the attention Katrina brought to the New Orleans and half-jokingly proposed, "I think what we really need in the Valley is a huge national disaster to show people how much poverty and suffering there really is hidden down our back roads that most people avoid. There are farm workers and their families living without paved roads, water, or even electricity in some cases." (BOALT Hall's Center for Social Justice, Conference on the Central Valley, November 2005).

While poverty has remained the same as before the historic Farm Worker Movement for migrant workers, the approach to addressing this poverty amidst plenty has changed over time. The second story that runs through this dissertation is the problematic of the changing frames of 'what is deemed possible' and impossible by social change agents during specific moments in time. One of the simplest but most profound lessons that I learned through the process of interviewing historic movement leaders, uncovering rich archival documents, and meeting with current program planners and policy makers, is that what was once imagined possible, today is not. And most importantly that today this lack of imagination is not the product of a failure of creativity, will, energy, or philanthropic resources but rather a condition produced by the currently desperate political-economic state that migrant farmworkers and California farms simultaneously find themselves in. While a social movement to 'overthrow the farm labor system' was imaginable to the early leaders of the National Farm Workers Association in 1964, today those same leaders and, now concretized, movement institutions see collaborating with growers on immigration reform to secure future jobs and generations of low wage labor as the only thinkable solution to the marginalization of migrant communities. Each chapter examines the specific

organizing ideas that dominate grant making and programming for Central Valley farmworker communities during the three moments highlighted in this project, and excavates where the ideas or ‘myths’ align with or disrupt what farmworker organizers and advocates deem possible.

The third story that this dissertation tells is about community development, and the various institutional structures and relationships negotiated by organizers, private and public funders, and community participants in regional improvement initiatives. In Chapter One development is about defining the boundaries of migrant communities to act upon, training a new kind of leadership for the emerging social movement, creating institutions where newly defined migrant leaders can build bridges with mainstream institutions, and concretizing a ‘community development theory’ to structure future foundation programs for decades to come. In Chapter Two development is about the conflict and tension between building long term community service institutions, a fluid social movement, and a major labor union – all different versions of community development that were never reconciled and eventually divided the movement. In Chapter Three development is about expertise, professionalization, and the increasingly central role of foundation staff as programmers, planners, and managers. In Chapter Four development is about collaboration and the ways in which philanthropic institutional arrangements can ‘disorganize’ alliances across a region. In Chapter Five, development is about development itself. In the face of economic desperation, stuck institutions, and ineffective funding structures even the most dedicated advocates can’t find a way out of supporting the current agricultural labor system that relies on constant streams of low wage immigrant labor and generations of migrant families mired in poverty.

The stories of the Central Valley, of what is deemed possible for social movement agents in different eras, and how development is negotiated across ideological, institutional, and professional lines are recounted across shifting social, economic and political terrains from the early 1960’s to the present. In Chapter One, *The Self-Help Model; Structuring Farm Worker Leadership*, I utilize ‘governmentality’ theory to show how instead of engaging an already defined and unitary poor subject, the ‘self-help’ approach proscribed a certain kind of poor citizen. In this chapter I argue that self-help model itself draws our attention to a specifically defined poor as the central and self-motivated actors of social change, masking the role of philanthropists, state programs, and popular ideas that shape the movements



and programs the poor are engaged in. And that the ideas, strategies, and institutional arrangements promoted by funders and planners play a central role in shaping the identities and actions of social movement participants. I do this by showing how the convergence of the self-help framework promoted by the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation and the War on Poverty Community Action Programs (CAPS) in Tulare County in the early 1960's structured the leadership and institution building central to the early organizing of the Farm Worker Movement. The farmworker 'self-help' model also revealed its own limits as outside funders and programmers shied away from the first strikes and union drives launched by the United Farm Workers of America (UFW, then National Farm Worker Association, NFWA) in 1964.

In Chapter Two, *The Oak or the Mistletoe: Are We Funding A Social Movement or a Union?*, the coupling and articulation of ideas including the frameworks of self-help, community union, ethnic pride, and civil rights exposed both the opportunities and the central challenges and divisions within the Farm Worker Movement and between movement institutions. For the farmworker struggle, while the unique combination, or articulation, between a social movement, community service ethic, and a major labor union initially gave the Farm Worker Movement its energy, it was also what presented the movement with its major challenges. This chapter is a detailed examination of the conflicting ideas, strategies, and institutional arrangements of a social movement through the lens of its relationship to public and private funders. I argue that the seemingly unified vision of Cesar Chavez to build a community union and social movement for farm workers was torn apart through the diverging ideas and strategies employed by funders and the various institutions engaged in the Farm Worker Movement. Ultimately I found that through relationships with funders and processes of formal institutionalization, Chavez' unified theory of social change fractured, separating the social welfare and leadership of workers from the economic structures that maintain farmworker poverty and powerlessness – the social movement from the union. In the end these divisions and institutional conflicts limited what the movement could achieve.

Chapter Three, *The Program Officer: negotiating the politics of philanthropy* is an exploration of the shift from a farm worker organizing frame to the idea of immigration integration promoted through foundation professionals throughout the 1990's to the present. This chapter explains the increasingly important role of professional foundation staff, i.e. the program

officer, in negotiating the emerging funding ideas and collaborative grant making models – in this case the specific rise in immigrant integration and civic participation frameworks. I argue that understanding the micro-practices of the foundation program officer and the institutional context in which they work, increases our understanding of how ideas are specifically developed, used and negotiated. In this chapter I explore the daily work of the foundation program officer by investigating the political negotiations between foundation staff, farmworker and immigrant organizations and the oftentimes more conservative foundation leadership. With a focus on how program officers negotiate funding immigrant and farmworker organizations in the conservative, neo-liberal, institutional and political climate of the 1990's, I argue that self described 'progressive' program officers attempt to overcome the conservative ideology of their board members yet operate within an increasingly professional, hierarchical culture that sets a limited terrain of negotiation. The articulation of funding frameworks that simultaneously speak to the interests of foundation boards, staff, and grantees often dilutes and redirects efforts that aim to address social and economic inequity still endured by farmworker communities.

Chapter Four, *The Hurricane or the Tornado; the rise of the philanthropic collaborative* is a case study of one large scale Central Valley foundation driven 'collaborative initiative' created around the pluralistic idea of immigrant civic participation. This chapter explores the tensions involved in organizing farm workers around a unified conception of 'immigrant civic participation' and 'collaboration'. I argue that rather than 'buying' or being governed by the ideas of funders, this case study shows how nonprofit organizations born out of social movements interpret, accept or reject the specific ideas and forms of management used by private foundations through the form of the 'collaborative initiative' that became dominant in the 1990's. However, I also found that participation in collaborative initiatives, that grantees don't fully invest meaning in, can have a 'disorienting' or 'disorganizing' effect as grantees spend time and resources reorganizing their work around vague and temporary monetary, rather than issue-driven, alliances.

Finally, Chapter Five, *Like Oil and Water: Worker-Grower Partnerships and the New Win-Win Paradigm* challenges the now popular conception of 'consensus based organizing'. In this chapter I interrogate the 'Win-Win' consensus model in the context of a large-scale foundation initiative in farmworker communities in the San Joaquin Valley. Through extensive

qualitative interviews and observation of this initiative between 2007 and 2008, I observed how specific consensus building institutional structures excluded strategies to address deeply embedded migrant poverty and the long standing pesticide, housing, sexual harassment, and other work place abuses still commonly experienced by California farmworkers. These foundation-led strategies coincided with the new grower friendly rhetoric of farmworker movement<sup>1</sup> leaders as they sought industry allies in their campaign for the AgJobs legislation. For the first time in history the movement rhetoric (at least) is about saving California agriculture from the dangers of global competition and the need to insure a sustainable workforce through new guestworker programs with pathways to citizenship. This is a completely different message from the early movement efforts to end the U.S.-Mexico ‘Bracero’ guest worker program which was then considered the biggest barrier to organizing farmworkers. As part of the new worker-industry alliance, historic movement non-profit organizations, such as the Farm Worker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD), are working with growers to improve production strategies and increase industrial efficiency, thereby increasing profit and competitiveness of farmers while also increasing the output (and therefore theoretically the wages) and sustainability of workers. Since the cost of doing business is more expensive (e.g. land, water, equipment, labor, and regulation costs) in California than in the global south, this approach sees the human worker as the only malleable input to increase competitiveness. So instead of ‘fighting’ for workers’ rights and enforcing existing regulations, former farmworker advocates are looking for ways to make workers produce more for growers. In this chapter I challenge the position that there is an equitable and viable ‘win-win’ in this approach.

Personally, this dissertation is also a story about the unintended consequences of good intentions. After reading one of many drafts of my dissertation chapters, a graduate student friend of mine said, “You know, your work is filled with good intentions gone awry.” After an initial writers’ moment of defense I realized that emotionally and morally this is partially what my work is about. Throughout the research process I have been well aware of the ‘gone awry’ aspect of my search to understand failed attempts to change systems that breed inequality and oppression. But somehow the ‘good intentions’ got lost in the story –or almost seemed like an unimportant

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the common conception that the ‘Farm Worker Movement’ occurred only in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, members of the UFW and ally organizations consider their current work as a part of the long term ‘movement.’

distraction from a structural argument. But in an important way intentions do play a central role in my work. William Domhoff, renowned public scholar of philanthropy and urban development, has warned researchers to ignore the intentions of well meaning donors and policy makers whose work, by virtue of the limits of private philanthropy and elite power, has a negative impact. However, I believe that without understanding the intentions, the conditions, circumstances, and lived political conflicts in which people make decisions, and attempt to ‘do good,’ how are we going to understand the complex process of change –the wages of virtue –as new leaders emerge, institutions are built, and movements are crafted? In this dissertation I have tried to explore the often conflicted roles people, be they foundation program officers or highly critiqued movement leaders, play in attempting to improve conditions for people who labor against a system so large that many would never even attempt to imagine changing. Perhaps this sensitivity comes from the irony of dedicating such a significant amount of my time, thought, and intellectual growth to an analytical critique of the ideas, values, and principles I was raised on (and in many cases still deeply believe in) and the professional skills that I spent a significant amount of my adult life cultivating. In many ways the internal conflicts and contradictions of human ‘benevolence’ define efforts to address poverty amidst plenty.

### **Research Methods**

This research project was initially comprised of the investigation of one foundation collaborative, which is the project detailed in Chapter Five. However, through the process of asking myself how I would answer the specific questions I was most interested in, as articulated above, it became clear that the project would need to include historical dimensions. What was originally an ethnographic research design to gain a deep understanding of one project, in one location, became a broad scale, mixed methods approach. In order to understand the historic relationship between private funders and farmworker organizing, how certain ideas and program frameworks changed over time and how others endured, I conducted in depth archival research. I investigated both archived foundation reports and the archives of the United Farm Workers at the United Farm Workers of America archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, and at the Center for American History at the University of Austin, Texas. I also benefitted from oral histories and archival materials on California foundations at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, at Berkeley. Archived foundation annual reports also proved to contain valuable historic data.

While Chapters One and Two are primarily the product of archival methods, research for Chapters Three, Four and Five included primarily three methods: open-ended individual interviews, participant observation, and analysis of professional program materials. For Chapter Three I interviewed 12 foundation program officers, 5 consultants, and 5 organizational staff working on farm worker and immigrant projects. For this chapter I also attended foundation network gatherings and trainings as an observer. For Chapters Four and Five I interviewed an additional 50 foundation and nonprofit organization staff associated with the two initiatives featured in each chapter. I also attended collaborative meetings and trainings associated with these projects between 2006 and 2008. Individual interviews and participant observation were method that revealed the specific practices and relationships that foundations and grantees engage in, beyond the theoretical ideas and program frameworks proposed.

I consider my work ethnographic in that for two years I immersed myself in the lives of historic and contemporary community organizers, policy makers, and foundation staff in order to understand the ideas, cultures, and politics of their daily lives. More specifically, I consider my work an institutional ethnography in that my methods allowed me to study the various forms, strategies, and cultures of institutions and institutional relationships that emerge across different social, political and economic contexts. What I did not do is study the lives of farmworkers. In moments throughout this project, I felt that I ought to include the voices of farmworkers and farmworker families from the movement times to the present in the areas where the projects I studied were launched. However, because there are many beautiful, moving, and politically important accounts of farmworker lives, and not many studies of the institutional structures that aid and hinder improving conditions in agricultural communities, I decided to maintain a central focus on organizations and professionals. This is also not a comprehensive account of the Farm Worker Movement or farmworker organizing but rather a glimpse into the relationship between private foundations, social movements, and the ideas, institutional structures, professional processes and relationships negotiated by private foundations and farmworker advocates, organizers, and institutions across a region.

## Chapter One

### The Self-Help Model: Structuring Farm Worker Leadership

#### Introduction

Almost everybody approves if farm workers decide to build houses for themselves; not everybody approves if they decide to go on strike. -1965 Annual Report, The Max L. Rosenberg Foundation

Despite the good intentions of those who seek to empower others, relations of empowerment are, in fact, relations of power in and of themselves. –Barbara Cruikshank, 1999

The idea of ‘self-help’ as an approach to alleviating poverty has a long history and has experienced many different incarnations since the Settlement House movement led by the legendary Jane Adams in Chicago’s immigrant neighborhoods at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Early American philanthropic institutions, including the John D. Rockefeller Foundation which funded Adams, promoted the idea that motivating the recent immigrant poor to ‘help-themselves’ pull up their proverbial bootstraps served two purposes: to alleviate poverty and to protect industrialists from political unrest in the increasingly impoverished American city (Adams 1893). In the 1960’s ‘self-help’ or the then newly coined term ‘empowerment’ took on new meaning and reflected the community action spirit of the growing civil rights movement. Through the War on Poverty’s call for *maximum feasible participation*, the poor were encouraged to join Community Action Programs (CAPs) to assess and confront the root problems of persistent poverty, including challenging responsible institutions and societal structures. During the neoliberal turn of the 1980’s ‘self-help’ took on yet another meaning as conservative politicians and public intellectuals put forth the now well-worn argument that a bloated welfare state (as a result of the public programming and legislation from the New Deal era, to the War on Poverty) has created deep dependency among the poor. Charles Murray’s

*Losing Ground* (1984) was one of the first comprehensive pleas to attack ‘big government’ that in his terms eroded responsibility and initiative among the poor. With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and the defunding of many public programs for the poor, the new self-help emphasized individual-reliance, entrepreneurialism, and market strategies, replacing the social action and systemic change tone of the 1960’s.

Instead of engaging an already defined and unitary poor subject, each ‘self-help’ approach proscribes a certain kind of poor citizen. Program planners and managers of the settlement house movement described the poor as immigrants looking to integrate and gain social mobility in the then booming industrial city - the ‘immigrant worker citizen.’ The poor involved in the self-help projects of the 1960’s through the War on Poverty and social movements have been described as ‘activists’, ‘leaders’ or ‘volunteers. The poor engaged in the welfare reform movement launched in the 1980’s through the early 1990’s were negatively described as ‘welfare moms’ or ‘absentee fathers’. The self-help model itself draws our attention to a specifically defined poor as the central and self-motivated actors of social change, masking the role of philanthropists, state programs, and the fundamental ideas that shape the movements and programs that engage the poor.

This chapter shows how the convergence of the self-help programs funded through both The Max L. Rosenberg Foundation and the War on Poverty’s CAPS in Tulare County created specific ‘technologies of citizenship’ that structured farmworker leadership and institutions at the start of the historic Farm Worker Movement. I argue that the framing of self-help institutions and leaders gave critical energy to the emerging Farm Worker Movement, yet also proscribed its limits. I describe the self-help framings of outside funders and programs as ‘technologies of citizenship’ as used by Barbara Cruikshank in her study of the ‘empowerment’ approach of the War on Poverty (1999). Drawing from Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’, technologies of citizenship organize relations of power as expressed through ideas, institutions, discourses, or programs (as opposed to force, violence or direct threat) that alter the way people internalize how they should act. Social programs that promote empowerment for example, for Cruikshank, “operate according to a political rationality for governing people in ways that promote their autonomy, self-sufficiency, and political engagement; in the classic phrase of early philanthropists, they are intended to, “help people, help themselves.” (Cruikshank, pp 12-13). In this sense,

through a converging set of ideas and institutional structures and programs people come to believe that governing themselves, as opposed to challenging, claiming, or relying upon private and state structures of governance, makes them legitimate deserving citizens.

I propose that the Tulare County ‘self-help’ programs promoted three specific ‘technologies of citizenship’ that structured the actions of farm worker organizing. The first technology is the initial policy and program articulation of a ‘migrant poor’ worthy of public and private funding. Previously ignored by all outside interventionists, excluding union organizers, migrant farm workers first gained attention from philanthropic institutions and public officials when the Anglo migrant population grew with the exodus of dustbowl Oakies, and a national imagination was inspired through fictional and artistic renderings such as Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* (1939). The original conception of migrant poor was the migrant mother, an honorable stoic figure who struggled to keep her children fed and warm on her husband’s meager field wages and in migrant camp shanty’s. The second ‘self-help’ technology utilized in the early poverty programs funded through the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation and the War on Poverty was a new and kind of farmworker –the self-help leader. While historic attempts to organize the agricultural industry in California inspired organizers and advocates, the self-help programs of the early 1960’s defined a new kind of leader. Unlike the ethnically organized leaders of previous migrant worker institutions across California, the new self-help leader was interested in and capable of engaging in community improvement efforts across the traditional boundaries of worker-grower, Latino-Anglo, informal settlements-dominant mainstream institutions in the growing semi-urban settlements that dotted the agricultural region. The new leader was a bridge-builder who could successfully engage mainstream leadership and institutions. The third technology, working alongside the activation of ‘farmworker self-help leadership’ was a new conception of a ‘farmworker community’. At the time in which the War on Poverty and The Rosenberg Foundation self-help projects were launched, an increasing number of farmworkers were making the Central Valley home and moving less frequently to crops in other parts of the state or country. Migrant committees, hometown associations, and family networks always existed but as funders and program managers implemented self-help programs new ‘farmworker community’ boundaries were defined for programs to work through. These ‘technologies of citizenship’ were managed by a newly defined community development ‘expert’ - a program manager who



‘facilitated’ the participation of newly defined leadership and communities. In this chapter, the emergence of these technologies are described through three specific funding eras of the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation.

While I find ‘governmentality’ theory a useful framework for analyzing the intersection of public and private farmworker programming in the early 1960’s, I do not interpret ‘technologies of citizenship’ as complete or controlling, or the result of some unitary act of manipulation by the economic and political elite. Instead I interpret ‘technologies of citizenship’ as combinations of ideas, programs, and funding opportunities that, during specific moments in time, converge to solidify expectations and understandings of what it means to be an engaged citizen, or in this case a farmworker leader or institution. In my study of the self-help and empowerment ideas and strategies popularized through the 1960’s, the War on Poverty CAPS, and Central Valley farmworker funding converged to structure institutional and leadership development at the start of the movement. The engagement of farm workers in the Max L. Rosenberg and CAP programs was voluntary and not coercive but the structure of their engagement was determined by the idea that farm worker poverty could be solved by farm worker self-help, as opposed to other strategies such as strikes, unionization, worker owned cooperatives, or public welfare. Engaging farmworkers in self-help projects did build motivation, initiative, and a sense of pride, which in many ways is deeply important at the start of the movement. However, I argue that this approach structures the actions of participants and ‘experts’ around the fundamental conception that enduring poverty can only be solved by individual initiative that interrupts a ‘cultural cycle of hopelessness,’ and not by confronting the industrial system that perpetuates and relies upon low-wage immigrant labor. This chapter introduces a paradox that repeats itself throughout this dissertation, that programs and frameworks promoted by funders can at once facilitate and limit farmworker organizing.

In my analysis throughout this chapter I am not implying that worker-leaders involved in the self-help projects and the emerging social movement fully bought into or were trapped by a unified governing apparatus or mechanism of control as some scholars of ‘governmentality’ might argue. Instead I see ‘technologies of citizenship’ as structuring behavior by virtue of the doors they open and resources they provide, temporarily governing, or structuring, the ways in which people act, until the framings no longer make sense, as

movement priorities and strategies evolve. The people ‘governed’ under certain technologies of citizenship are themselves also making strategic decisions of what ideas, discourses, programs, and institutions makes sense to ally with in the broader movement to challenge the status quo –in this case an agricultural system that relies on constant streams of poor immigrant labor. The strategic decision to align with certain institutions and organizing models that may limit actions can be understood as a fusion of ‘governmentality’ and Antonio Gramsci’s ‘War of Position’ where temporary strategic alliances among unlikely institutions and interests are made in civil society to further (or limit) a long term agenda (Gramsci 2000).

I am also not arguing that foundations, program planners, or movement leaders always have clear, intentional or malicious intentions of rule. Rather, I propose that the power of ‘technologies of citizenship’ is the momentary combination of certain ideas, definitions of social change, and corresponding institutional structures and program frameworks (such as CAPS, Self-Help programs, and national public dialogue around engaging poor people in political participation) that shape individual and collection action. The convergence of farmworker movement leaders and funders depended on shared understandings of social positions and identities throughout the movements of the 1960’s and the public discourse on poverty communicated by scholars such as Oscar Lewis (1959) and Michael Harrington (1970), and leaders such as John and Robert Kennedy. In the following sections, I show how in the pre-movement context of the Depression, the Works Project Administration (WPA), and the subsequent War on Poverty the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation was able to align resources, build organizations, and train farmworker leaders under the ‘Self-Help’ model, contributing the emergence of the movement.

However, when the United Farm Workers of America (UFW, then NFWA) launched the 1964 rent and grape strike (as later described in this chapter) and farmworker leaders trained under the ‘self-help’ model wanted to join the picket lines, the point of convergence was ruptured and the self-help paradigm no longer made sense. The limits to confronting an agricultural labor system that maintains migrant poverty through the self-help model are clearly recognized by historic movement leaders who still strive to organize farmworkers in Tulare County. Yet due to the enduring sway and increasingly professionalized versions of self-help promoted by private foundations, historic movement institutions still structure programming

around this framework. This argument is important because it points to the often undocumented, un-credited, under-theorized role of private and public funding and institutions in structuring the emergence and legacy of a movement.

In order to contextualize the farmworker programs analyzed in this and subsequent chapters, I begin with a broad overview of the California farm labor system and the history of public attention paid to the question of farm labor poverty. The next section shows how the self-help approach promoted through the investments of the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation, the programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and eventually the Community Action Programs (CAPS) of the War on Poverty converged to structure the early leadership development and institutional building at the start of the historic Farm Worker Movement.

### **Poverty Amidst Plenty: Farmworkers in California's Central Valley**

“ . . . migrant worker families are the victims of a permanent disaster. An estimated 200,000-no one knows just how many-farm workers and their families, who work seasonally in California's cotton fields, fruit orchards and vegetable farms, have been swept up in a new disaster so vast that the eyewitness must grope back to the great depression to find anything like it. And it's here for all to see; a belt of hunger, disease and wretchedness running the 200-mile length of the West's richest valley, the San Joaquin . . . Wherever we looked-along the great highroad itself, beside the ditch bank and sloughs a few hundred yards off the road, in the mud-sodden camps of pitched tents and in sprawling shantytowns of knocked-down trailers, lean-tos and occasional neat, adobe cottages-we stepped into thumbnail dramas of incredible misery.” (“The Americans Nobody Wants,” in *Collier's Magazine*, April 1, 1950).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, sporadic attempts have been made to capture public attention and inspire outrage at the poor conditions of California farm laborers. While the conditions have not changed much over the past century, each public plea seems to evoke a new or emerging tragedy. The words of this American Red Cross worker above, interviewed for a 1950 expose in

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<sup>2</sup> Found in the Paul Taylor Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

*Collier's Magazine*, vividly illustrate the 'permanent disaster' that is the California farm labor system. Only this disaster did not begin or end in 1950. Today California's Central Valley is at once the richest agricultural region in the world and home to the poorest people living in the United States, with a higher concentration of poverty than in Appalachia or any inner city (Great Valley Center 1999, Brookings Institute 2005, AP 2008). Farmworker poverty in California's Central Valley is also not simply a lingering remnant of the dustbowl migration during the Great Depression or the more recent trend in migration from Mexico but stretches back to the Anglo settlement and purchase of California's most fertile lands.

As early as 1893 British Ambassador, James Bryce, called attention to the source of enduring migrant poverty:

When California was ceded to the United States (1848), land speculators bought up large tracts under Spanish titles, others foreseeing the coming prosperity, subsequently acquired great domains by purchase, either from the railways, which had received land grants, or directly from the government. Some of these speculators, by holding their land for a rise, made it difficult for immigrants to acquire small freeholds, and in some cases checked the growth of farms . . . others established enormous farms, in which the soil is cultivated by hired laborers, many of whom are discharged after the harvest - - a phenomenon rare in the United States, which is elsewhere a country of moderately sized farms, owned by persons who do most of their labour by their own hand and their children's hands. Thus the land system of California presents features both peculiar and dangerous, a contract between great properties, often appearing to conflict with the general weal, and the sometimes hard pressed small farmer, together with a great mass of unsettled labour, thrown without work into the towns at a certain time of the year. (James Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, McMillan, C. 1893)

Unlike the *Colliers* report that draws attention mainly to the enormous influx of poor migrants to the Central Valley and their poor living conditions, Bryce frames migrant poverty as a direct product of the frontier land grabs and real estate speculation and the unprecedented size of farms being formed that required large numbers of seasonal disposable labor. During the late 1800's the politics of the frontier, legal and illegal land purchases, battles over water and the deep connection between land, finance, and political

power were understood as the source of the suffering and conflict around migrant labor. Since the institution of the land system described by Bryce, California farm labor has been organized around what Philip Martin (2003) calls 'The Three C's of Farm Labor'. The first 'C' is concentration. A vast majority of farm workers are employed on the largest farms. The second 'C' is for contractors. Farm labor is managed by contractors who make a profit negotiating and personally benefiting from the difference between what the farmer will pay to have a job done and what the workers get paid. Farmers benefit from this arrangement as it makes it difficult for worker advocates to directly negotiate and enforce wages standards, farm labor health, safety, and fair treatment regulations. The third 'C' of California farm labor is conflict, a story history of protest that continues today but that has still not managed to address the poverty born of an industry reliant on constant flows of new, non-citizen low wage migrant workers.

For the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, while significant farmworker organizing took place there were no major public or private philanthropic efforts to address the concerns of migrant labor. This is partly due to the non-white and non-citizens make-up of the farmworker population, a labor force both employers and the government hoped would not settle in California and would instead travel with the crops and eventually return to their home countries. The anti immigrant climate in the United States, the violent response to farm labor uprisings, and the lack of labor laws to protect farmworkers were not the only reasons that public and philanthropic attention were not directed towards the plight of farmworkers in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout early 1900's-1930's farmworker poverty was clouded by Americana imagery of the small family farm, where Anglo family members are the only visible labor. As Don Mitchell (1996) shows in his study of California farm labor, popular marketing and literary imagery of empty, pastoral landscapes with family working the land hid the reality of poor migrant labor camps that have existed in California since the turn of the century. It was perhaps not until 1939, when John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* juxtaposed the radical difference between the peaceful bountiful family farm land California advertises itself as and the real lives of poor migrant men and families who plant and harvest our food, that national attention was drawn to the plight of the farmworker.

Before Steinbeck's story of the Oakie migrant farmer, various waves of immigrant labor were recruited to establish a system of labor-intensive seasonal agriculture in California's Central Valley. During the 1770's

Spanish farmers with large land grants expanded their wheat operations and Father Serra negotiated with Mexico to send workers for the growing harvests. This agreement can be understood as the first wave of ‘braceros’ – or Mexican contracted temporary workers- still a source of farm labor widely debated today. In 1847, just as gold was discovered in the West, Mexico surrendered California to the United States. The Gold Rush ushered in a get rich quick land grab where California’s new business elite transformed large wheat farms into more profitable fruits and vegetables that could be shipped to the ports in Southern and Northern California on the newly constructed railways. As labor-intensive fruits and vegetable increased the need for workers, farmers hired Chinese men and women who came to California to build the railroads. Always supporters of open immigration policy, large growers opposed efforts to bar Chinese immigration because they needed the workers but eventually lost this battle with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Farmers did succeed in barring Chinese, and subsequent Japanese and Filipino, laborers from purchasing land or marrying U.S born citizens, hoping that they would remain a cheap and flexible migrant labor force.<sup>3</sup>

While small-scale labor organizing attracted national attention in the early 1900’s, success was severely limited because of organizers inability to mobilize workers around single growers when workers moved frequently to different jobs. It was also difficult to organize simply because farmworkers had no protections under national law. National farm labor legislation is based on the claim that farm hands need no labor protections because unlike other industries farm laborers move on to farm management and ownership. However, this was never the case in California. Nationally, farmworkers still have no national labor protections and California farmworkers have the only partially successful Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB, 1975) negotiated between Cesar Chavez of the historic farmworker movement and then Governor Jerry Brown.

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<sup>3</sup> In the 1890’s Japanese were permitted to immigrate to Hawaii and California for work and between 1900-1908 California ranchers recruited and employed Japanese immigrants in great numbers. However, Japanese immigrants quickly climbed the agricultural ladder and became farmers, leaving no supply of poor and desperate countrymen to follow their footsteps. This made them a less than ideal labor supply for the growing industrial agricultural economy that relies on poor, migratory workers. From 1908 through 1921 Indian and Hindu immigrants became central to the labor force.

In the 1910's-1920 the International Workers of the World, or IWW 'wobblies', were active nationally and drew attention to their efforts to organize farmworkers in the fields of California as illustrated in Greg Hall's book *Harvest Wobblies* (2001). However, national attention to the IWW's cause was fleeting. Their efforts to organizing California farm laborers into one big union to topple industrial agriculture, saw limited success partly because they were not accustomed to organizing a non-white workforce with incredible ethnic, age, gender, and residency diversity. The IWW approach was to replace employers with labor coops. This was a difficult task for outside, oftentimes Anglo, organizers as many workers were already organized in ethnic mutual support organizations. When the IWW organizers did succeed in organizing a major strike, it ended in the brutal violence at the hands of growers and local law enforcement against protestors and the union (Hall 2001). The rapid increase in Mexican migration in the late 1910's and 1920's further challenged farm labor organizers. From the 1920's through the 1940's growers actively recruited Mexican nationals that they expected to 'go home' between harvests and not cause any 'trouble' for the farms in the Valley.

It was not until the migration of primarily Anglo 'Oakies' during the great depression that support of public and private charities was directed at the plight of California farmworkers –largely the result of several eye opening publications and reports. In 1939 *Grapes of Wrath* drew national attention to the poor conditions and unjust treatment of California farmworkers through the story of the Jodes. The Jodes, an Oklahoma share-cropping family, had their farm repossessed during the Great Depression, and after seeing sunny advertisements about the bounty in California, set out West to try their luck. The Jodes invest everything they have in the journey only to find that thousands of other families are also making the same trip to the fields of the Central Valley, with the same hopes and dreams. These dreams are not so different from the Mexican migrants' myths of 'El Norte', a vision of plentiful work and opportunity that continues to attract young men and women seeking a better life for their families. After many roadblocks and misfortunes the Jodes arrive in California only to discover that there is an oversupply of labor, no labor rights, and that the giant farmers are in collusion to attract desperate migrant workers to live in migrant shantys and work for below poverty level wages – barely enough to keep their children clothed, fed, and disease free. The Jodes discover what generations of non-white migrant workers had experienced for decades.

Steinbeck's tragedy struck a cord nationally not only because of the immensity of the farm labor problem and the final long years of the Depression, but because of the simplicity of their dream – a healthy home and steady work- neither of which were viable then or today for farm laborers. In addition to drawing national attention to migrant poverty, starvation and the abuses of corporate agriculture, Steinbeck built recognition for the WPA efforts to improve conditions for migrants and the importance of farm labor organizing. The federal project portrayed in the book provides a glimmer of hope but never seems to feed enough people, house enough families, or educate enough children. Reflecting on the 1930's era of national labor turmoil and the brutal and ultimately unsuccessful struggles of the Communist Cannery and Agricultural Workers and IWW union organizing, Steinbeck concludes *Grapes of Wrath* with striking workers being physically beaten, but not without hope that collective organizing may rise the spirits and power of farmworkers. With communism and collectivism on the rise around the world, *Grapes of Wrath* both excited and frightened people living in agricultural communities. Of the frightened included large growers and public officials in Fresno and Bakersfield, the urban centers of California's agricultural fields, which banned the book at the time of its release.

Also in 1939, the now famous photos of Dorthea Lange, picturing stoic migrants and the dirt covered faces of their tow headed children evoked similar emotions and a sense of urgency at a national scale. As Lange's photos, commissioned by the Farm Security Action (FSA) and the WPA, were distributed to news outlets across the country displaced Oakies farm families became icons of the era. The most popular of her photos is 'Migrant Mother' and of this work Lange recalled,

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the



tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.<sup>4</sup>

Like *Grapes of Wrath*, Lange's images drew attention to the strength, courage, and desperate need of the migrant worker and promoted the spirit of service and charity inspired by the WPA. That many of the workers pictured were white mid-western share-croppers displaced during the Depression helped draw attention to a labor force that policy makers and the general public never paid much attention. However, drawing sympathy to the individual traveling Oakie also overshadowed the historic structural implications of a labor system that breeds poverty among a constant stream of increasingly invisible Latino and Asian farmworkers.

In this respect, Lange's images were more popularly received than the work of her husband agricultural economist Paul Taylor and his radical critique of the farm labor system. Taylor and Lange together produced several reports in the late 1930's and later a book in 1941 (*An American Exodus*) on the conditions of agricultural workers in California. Taylor's writings formed a basis for the La Follette Committee hearings of 1939, which presented to the U.S. Senate major civil liberties violations against farmworkers. At this time Taylor was an economics faculty at UC Berkeley and his work was very controversial in a university system where agribusiness was represented among the regents and where the UC provided direct support for agricultural research to major California growers. Ultimately Taylor believed that the power of agribusiness, which in California often operates above immigration, land, and water law, was incompatible with democracy<sup>5</sup>.

Taylor, Lange, and Steinbeck were not alone in drawing attention to the abuses of industrial agriculture and the need for farm labor organizing in 1939. This same year Cary McWilliams's *Factories in the Field*, the first broad factual, sociological exposé of the environmental, social and political damage inflicted by corporate agriculture in California, swept the nation. Like Steinbeck—McWilliams chronicles the suffering of the dust bowl

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<sup>4</sup> Popular Photography, Feb. 1960, found in the Paul Taylor Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>5</sup> Information on Paul Taylor and Dorothea Lange was gathered from the Paul Taylor Papers at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

migrants but begins with the Spanish land grants and continues on to examine the experience of the various ethnic groups that have provided labor for California's agricultural industry—Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos—and all of the historic efforts to organize farm labor unions.

In his conclusion to *Factories in the Fields* McWilliams predicted that with an increase in white citizen workers, who may have an easier time gaining political and union recognition, farm labor organizing might finally see its day. However the 1930's ended with little farm labor organizing. At the start of the new decade an increased number of Mexican nationals were recruited to provide a constant stream of new workers and throughout the 1940's and 50's farmers fabricated a labor supply shortage to continue bringing in 'bracero' workers with no legal rights, a theoretically limited stay in California, and no political capital to organize. Farmers were also eager to hire the growing stream of undocumented workers, as there was no penalty for doing so. Significant farmworker organizing did not re-occur until 1964 when the Braceros Program was officially shut down, and Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta launched an organizing campaign in the Central Valley through the National Farm Worker Association (eventually re-named the United Farm Workers of America, UFW).

While organizing efforts of the 1930's were ultimately unsuccessful, the public spotlight on abuses experienced by California farmworkers did attract the first glimmer of interest by private grant making foundations. Following the WPA programs and foundation investments in the decades following the great depression, journalist Edward R. Murrow's 1960 CBS documentary *Harvest of Shame* about the poverty and abuses suffered by migrant farm laborers heightened public attention to unprecedented levels. Murrow concluded his nationally viewed film with a plea to the American public and political leadership,

“The migrants have no lobby. Only an enlightened, aroused and perhaps angered public opinion can do anything about the migrants. The people you have seen have the strength to harvest your fruit and vegetables. They do not have the strength to influence legislation. Maybe we do. Good night, and good luck.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See bibliography for full citation.

Among the American leaders who became committed to addressing the abuses of the farm labor system in 1960 was newly elected President John F. Kennedy. On the heels of the nationally screening of *Harvest of Shame* Kennedy denounced the Bracero Program that made it near impossible to organize farmworkers in the 1950's. The battle against the Bracero Program saw victory in 1964 and with the end of the continual importation of contracted Mexican workers, a door was opened for the historic farmworker movement of the 1960's. The following section describes the first philanthropic self-help efforts to address farm labor poverty in California in the 1930's and the subsequent self-help programs that structured the early organizing base for the farmworker movement of the 1960's.

### **The Rosenberg Foundation, Farm Worker Self-Help and the Emerging Farm Worker Movement**

The historical convergence of WPA, Max L. Rosenberg Foundation and War on Poverty funding in Tulare County structured 'self-help' leadership and organizational development that contributed to the initial momentum of the historic Farm Worker Movement in the 1960's. The three 'technologies of citizenship' initiated during this time, the articulation of a 'migrant poor', the 'farmworker leader', and the 'farmworker community,' were all managed by a newly defined community development 'expert'. Central to the development of these technologies is the foundation program officer, perhaps the first 'expert' to define farmworker poverty and community development for the Central Valley region. The emerging interest in the migrant poor, farmworker leadership, and farmworker communities is revealed in three phases of Rosenberg Foundation programming as described through the work of three generations of Max L. Rosenberg Foundation program officers<sup>7</sup>. The Max L. Rosenberg Foundation invested in Valley farmworker communities for over 5 decades<sup>8</sup>. While not an

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<sup>7</sup> The specific professional practices and roles of the foundation program officer are described in greater detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>8</sup> Data gathered on Rosenberg Foundation funding priorities and grants includes: interview with past President, Kirke Wilson, Rosenberg Foundation archived annual reports, interviews with past grantees, United Farm Workers of America archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, and an oral history with past Rosenberg President, Ruth Chance, 1947-1976, "Bay Area Foundation History, Volume II, Ruth Clouse Chance," The Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley.

overwhelming amount of funds were spent, Rosenberg investments enabled the development of a network of farmworker serving organizations and leaders. Foundation interest in and understanding of specifically Mexican migration, labor, and community organization was very limited in foundation circles at the early stages of the movement, and the leadership of the Rosenberg Foundation played a central role in bringing the issues and concerns of Latino immigrants to the foundation world.

The self-help model of the Rosenberg Foundation came in three waves. The first articulation of farmworker self-help came through Depression era grants, mostly to support the development of community and childcare centers for migrant families and inter-ethnic education programs. During this era the model ‘self-help’ migrant poor was the migrant mother- imagine the famous photo of Dorthea Lange’s ‘migrant mother’ communicated through the WPA media projects. The second iteration of the self-help framework moved away from the migrant mother and child and engaged the male field worker and his family in building housing and developing leadership through the process of investing in and building community infrastructure. The third wave of self-help, that eventually found its limits with the 1964 grape strike, was the self-help community development programs that merged with War on Poverty programming. The following sections describe the emergence of the migrant poor subject, the farmworker leader, and the farmworker community across three eras of Max L. Rosenberg Foundation grant making.

### 1. Leslie Gaynard and The Children Who Move With The Crops: Self-Help and the Migrant Family

When I started out looking for California funders with a history supporting farmworkers, several Bay Area foundation program officers told me that Kirke Wilson, President of the Rosenberg Foundation from 1976-2006, is the “grandfather of farmworker funding”.<sup>9</sup> Once an organizer with a Tulare County farm labor cooperative program in the early 1960’s, Wilson’s funding approach in the 1970’s was to invest in farmworker cooperatives to build housing and utilities infrastructure –at once developing leadership of individual farmworkers and improving the enduring dire living conditions for migrant workers. While Wilson did have a major influence on California farmworker funding initiatives, as described in the proceeding chapters, I

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<sup>9</sup> Anonymous interviews with ten California program officers, Spring 2006-Fall 2007

quickly found out that there were two pioneering women program officers at Rosenberg that came before him. Much of Wilson's early work at Rosenberg was built upon the decisions and grants shaped by Leslie Gaynard and Ruth Chance.

The Rosenberg Foundation was established in 1935 by appointed trustees of Max L. Rosenberg. Rosenberg was the president of Rosenberg Brothers & Co., the California fruit packing and shipping firm he and his brothers formed in 1893. "The company prospered and became the largest of its kind in the world, with packinghouses and mills throughout the agricultural areas of California and Oregon, and sales offices in 65 foreign countries. In his will, Max Rosenberg left the bulk of his estate to establish a foundation with broad charitable purposes and wide latitude in how the foundation might be operated."<sup>10</sup> In 1936, the Rosenberg Foundation opened its first office in San Francisco, hired staff, and began making grants. To this day, the foundation employs a small staff, with the Executive Director (ED) also serving as the Senior Program Officer. The first Program Officer (PO) and ED was Leslie Gaynard. When Gaynard started her work with Rosenberg in 1936 she was the only foundation program officer in California. The San Francisco Foundation was not founded until 1948 with a grant from Rosenberg. And unlike the James Irvine (also founded in the 1930's), which got in trouble after the 1969 Tax Reform Act that required foundations to diversify beyond family interests and report on grantmaking and financial activities, Rosenberg diversified early on. By diversifying board membership beyond family and by selling and reinvesting family company stock and assets the foundation was the first in California to hire professional staff with the ability to design programs and a long-term funding strategy.

In this context Gaynard conducted her own research across the state and nation, and in consultation with her board, framed the first funding priorities of the Rosenberg Foundation. With the plight of migrant farmworkers in the spotlight in the 1930's and 1940's, federal WPA government funding was pouring into Central Valley communities to assist displaced Oakies arriving to migrant farmworker camps. According to Kirke Wilson, whom I interviewed at his home in San Francisco, Leslie Gaynard was eager to contribute to the movement to aid migrant workers,

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<sup>10</sup> [www.rosenfound.org](http://www.rosenfound.org), website visited in May-July, 2008

“ . . . The ‘first program officer West of the Rockies, was an innovator who was excited to explore how Rosenberg could help the influx migrant workers and their children in California’s Central Valley. At this time, Leslie Gaynard was the only foundation staff person, period, west of Illinois. At the time there were no proposals, she drove to Bakersfield, listened to the needs of farmworker families in Kern County. She found people based on a couple previous WPA family planning grants on labor camps. The Rosenberg theory of change in the Depression area was to leverage WPA grants. For example Rosenberg would pay for materials to build parks, community centers, etc. that were initiated under the WPA.’” (Interview with Kirke Wilson, 2008).

According to Wilson, and confirmed by Rosenberg’s archived annual reports, under Gaynard’s leadership between 1935-57 the Foundation operated with two assumptions when funding farmworker projects. First it was proposed that the best way to address the problems experienced in farmworker communities was to start with women and children. Not only did Max Rosenberg express concern for children in need through his charity during his lifetime, but focusing on children has also proven to be a more successful framework for convincing foundation boards to address the needs of immigrants and minorities.<sup>11</sup> By framing the ‘migrant community’ as one of mothers and children in need, and not organized workers in protest of the worsening conditions at the time, foundations and policy makers articulated a new ‘fundable community’. The second approach was to support the ‘responsible institutions’ to address the needs of migrant families that they are not currently addressing. Schools, for example, experiencing tensions between the increasing number of Latino non-English speaking children of farmworkers and the Anglo children of ranchers, were asked to participate in inter-ethnic relations programs. Towards the end of the Depression era Gaynard convinced her board to fund childcare or educational support for farm working women, while many farm-working men were away fighting in World War II. During this time Rosenberg complimented WPA community planning grants and funded the founding of numerous migrant community centers and childcare programs in Fresno, Tulare and Kern County, some of which still exist today. At this time the conception of self-help was to provide educational and childcare resources that would enable migrant

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Rosenberg Annual Reports, and interviews with foundation program officers, 2006-2007

women to help themselves work and therefore help their families and newly defined 'migrant communities'.

As the war came to a close, Gaynard proposed that Rosenberg move away from supporting migrant women through childcare services and instead focus on the teenage children of migrant workers. In the early 1940's Gaynard wrote a letter to public officials, local institutions and her board of directors about the common concerns across the country for young people, minority teens, and in the Central Valley children of migrant workers. From 1937-1946 a majority of Central Valley grants from Rosenberg went towards inter-group relations between the increasingly Latino farmworker population and Anglo farmworkers and ranchers in the shape of school programming, community centers, and bi-lingual educational programs. While concerned with migrant rights and treatment, the foundation grants were primarily designed not to hold abusing institutions accountable but to ease the tensions that were growing between the growing Latino population and Anglo rancher families. As framed in the 1947 Rosenberg Foundation Annual Report,

California, where only one person in three is California-born, has long been faced with the necessity of integrating its foreign-born and different nationalities into the state and community life. The 1930's added migration to the state of agricultural laborers from the Southwest . . .the first grants were for projects giving services to émigrés . . .as the years went by projects placed increasing emphasis upon integration of one group to another and breaking down of discrimination through direct action and educational methods.

As Gaynard traveled across the Central Valley, looking for allies and organizations to fund inter-group relations projects in agricultural communities, one highly influential person she met was Florence Wyckoff. Wyckoff was a life-long social activist from the Depression era through the 1970's. Her legacy includes national lobbying to maintain the Farm Security Administration, the passage of the 1962 Federal Migrant Health Act, and advocacy of migrant children as a member of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth during the 1940's and '50's. In order to gain support and implement migrant programs at the local level, while serving on the Governor's Committee, Wyckoff formed citizen groups in

Tulare Country to address the health and education of migrant children. According to Rosenberg President (1958-76) Ruth Chance,

Although Florence was the chairman of the committee on migrant children of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth, she couldn't just go into Fresno County or anywhere else and do something about those children; she had to have the support of some key local people. She helped to develop a citizens' group there, which cooperated with her, some of them rather reluctantly, I think, and some with energy and conviction.<sup>12</sup>

These local citizen groups and the programs they eventually formed, including, educational conferences for migrants, public educators and policy makers (*Children Who Move with The Crops*), were funded by Rosenberg for almost two decades. The idea during this era was to both engage farmworker children and families in educational programs to help them educate and better themselves, and also to inform policy makers of the needs of newly defined 'migrant communities'. Between 1947 and 1959, at the height of the Bracero Program and increased Mexican immigration, many of Rosenberg's grants went to Mexican American projects, a majority in the Central Valley. Funded projects included school-community leadership teams to build relationships between the Anglo and growing Latino communities, school curriculum development around migrant and Spanish language students, and an outdoor education program to encourage interaction between Latino and Anglo youth. While Rosenberg became known for funding growing Latino and farmworker communities across the Central Valley, few if any of these organizations were actually founded or directed by Latinos. Alongside the migrant citizen groups formed by Wyckoff, these programs structured the ways in which farm workers became involved in local institutions and how Valley publics understood the needs and concerns of migrants.

An example of how self-help programming structured leadership and institutional development at the start of the Farm Worker Movement can be found in the projects funded through the American Friends Service Committee. Perhaps the most significant and influential Rosenberg project of the 1950's was a migrant youth education project founded by the

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<sup>12</sup> Bay Area Foundation History, Volume II, Ruth Chance, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Bard McAllister. Without funding guidelines, established non-profit institutions, or (presumably) identifiable migrant leaders to make immediate grants to, Gaynard, like Wyckoff, worked closely with local Valley officials and outsiders interested in the plight of migrant workers. One such relationship in the late 1950's was with the Quakers Friends community in the Bay Area at the Quaker Hidden Valley Estate in Los Altos. Members of this Quaker group wanted to develop a Central Valley farmworker project. In 1955, Leslie Gaynard brought together a woman from the Bay Area Friends with a man named Bard McAllister who directed the Quaker Central Valley's American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Visalia, a small town in Tulare County. Together they asked McAllister to look for a Central Valley place where they could fund a farmworker project. This year there was a lot of need in San Joaquin Valley migrant communities where workers were out of work due to a major flood.

The first big project that they came up with together was called PSYCON and was designed to address the tensions between grower kids and worker kids. They sold this idea to Rosenberg and McAllister recruited local farmworkers to train as leaders to facilitate educational activities and retreats for worker and grower children. The project ran in the small farmworker towns of Earlimart, Porterville, Woodlake, and Visalia and continued through the 1960's as Central Valley schools enrollment swelled due to the increased Mexican migrant labor brought on by the US Bracero Guestworker Program. This is the only Rosenberg grant that went through three generations of program officers at the foundation –from Leslie Gaynard, to Ruth Chance, to Kirke Wilson. Many of the PSYCON program participants played an active role in the farmworker movement of the 1960's, including farmworker leaders like Pablo Espinosa who was one of the first youth trainers, became a UFW organizer, OEO staff person, and eventually director of another AFSC farm labor project in Visalia.<sup>13</sup> The Rosenberg Foundation grants to migrant communities between the 1940's and 1950's solidified a public understanding of 'the migrant poor', 'farmworker leaders' and 'communities' in relationship to 'responsible institutional' such as schools, and a nascent 'self-help' ideology based on inter-cultural education and youth leadership. While not formally framed in these terms, the early Rosenberg Foundation funded programs in Tulare

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Pablo Espinoza, 2006.

County anticipated the ‘Culture of Poverty’ theory popularized by Oscar Lewis in 1959. According to Lewis,

The people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging. They are like aliens in their own country, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs. Along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness. (Lewis 1959)

Rosenberg’s work to engage ‘responsible institutions’ and rancher youth with migrant communities, and to educate and train migrant youth represents a theorization of poverty alleviation that posits that the cycle of poverty might be interrupted through contact and self initiative outside of the ‘subculture of poverty’. Like Lewis, the Rosenberg Foundation’s approach did not deny that migrant poverty is the result of capitalist production, in this case industrial agriculture, but posited that the more important concern is the resulting ‘culture of poverty’ marked by isolation, feelings of hopelessness, inferiority, and personal unworthiness. Following a culture of poverty theorization, the early self-help programs created structures for interrupting the poverty ‘culture’ including educational opportunity for migrant youth, institutional linkages between migrant families and ‘responsible institutions’, leadership training, and relationship building between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. The self-help programs of the 1950’s structured farmworker organizing around the idea that poverty could be alleviated through practices that ease tensions, build relationships, and connect the migrant poor to responsible institutions. While these programs created a certain kind of farmworker leader more concerned with education, institutional relationships, and infrastructure development than worker organizing, they also garnered mainstream institutional relationships that proved central to the legitimacy of a farmworker movement in the following decade.

## 2. Self-Help Housing: formulating a community development theory and expertise

In keeping with the AFSC’s approach to launch new projects, see how they flourish, and let them go, McAllister left the management of PSYCON in the hands of the schools and newly ‘developed’ migrant leaders and spun off new ideas to the Rosenberg Foundation. In 1959 he brought a proposal to

Rosenberg, under the leadership of Ruth Chance since 1957. His new idea was to find federal housing loans that could be used for affordable farmworker housing. Ruth introduced McAllister to a Rosenberg Board member, Charlotte Mack, who agreed to privately pay his salary. A grant was made and the American Friends Service Committee founded Three Rock Housing, which received grants from Rosenberg to train farmworkers to improve housing and community conditions for farmworkers in Tulare County for over two decades. A 1965 Rosenberg Foundation annual report describes the work of Three Rocks, and its successor, Self-Help Enterprise Inc.,

When in 1962, the Farm Housing Act made possible long-term, low-interest loans to rural citizens who could not obtain satisfactory credit elsewhere, the Friends were quick to move. They assigned a man to Tulare County to help the agricultural workers' families learn to help themselves. For they had no collateral of the usual type to put up for loans – only their own labor. . . . With encouragement of the AFSC worker groups of families began to meet together in the Goshen area. Those who had enough interest and perseverance eventually formed into groups of six or eight families who pledged to help each other build houses in their spare time and during the slack season between harvests. But first came literally months of meetings where they learned about the intricacies of obtaining building sites, the financial obligations of home ownership, loan requirements, building design and materials, code requirements, and landscaping. (Rosenberg Foundation Annual Report, 1965)

The goal of Three Rocks and Self-Help Housing Inc. started but did not end with the financing and construction of homes. After over 20 homes were built in the first few couple years, “the children from these homes seemed to have better ‘self-images’ than many other farm labor children, their motivation for education was higher . . . and their parents became more involved in community activities.” The article in the 1965 annual report describes the work of Rosenberg in Tulare Country farmworker housing as a part of a new ‘community development’ approach. Inspired by the then active War on Poverty’s ‘*maximum feasible participation*’ programs, the central philosophy of Rosenberg’s housing grants at this time was, “allowing people to decide for themselves what they want to do and helping them learn how to do it.” The approach is described as something new, where in the past programs for poor people were done for them rather than with them and

that for this work, a new kind of social worker is required. Bard McAllister is featured as a pioneer in this new community development practice,

“He is a channel of communication for the fearful. His chief tool is dynamic listening. He is a professional question asker. He does not peddle answers. He seeks out realistic factors that cause apathy and is not discouraged by the seemingly endless task. In plying his trade he will never do anything for the people that they can do for themselves. He directs all of the credit for progress to the volunteer leaders, where it belongs. He is content in his role of hired functionary. He knows that the true measure of his success lies not in what he does, but in what is done because he is there.” (Rosenberg Foundation Annual Report, 1965).

The facilitator, connector, activator role describing McAllister, the new community development practitioner or ‘expert’, was a direct product of the emerging ‘community development’ theory based on political empowerment and mobilization of the poor taking shape in the early 1960’s. Partially inspired by the self-determination and community action approaches of the growing social movements of the day, the conception of ‘self-help’ became a unifying idea for the new poverty programming. The new model was also informed by academic responses to Oscar Lewis’ culture of poverty theory. Advancing on Lewis ‘culture of poverty’ Michael Harrington’s widely read *The Other America* (1962) was one of the central treatises that directly informed the *maximum feasible participation* design of the War on Poverty and approaches to alleviating poverty during this time. Like Lewis, Harrington argued that the ‘new poor’ were not at fault for their poverty and were instead ‘left behind’ in the face of industrial change, essentially ‘in the wrong place (wrong industry, wrong neighborhood, wrong ethnic group) at the wrong time.’ Their failure to move with industrial progress was not for lack of individual initiative but rather a social product of capitalism. For Harrington, once the historical act of dislocation takes place (manufacturing mechanization, downsizing, re-location, or new industries that accept some and not other types of workers) the circumstance of the poor transforms from social circumstance to cultural fate –deepening through an entrenched cycle of poverty. Similar to Lewis, the cycle of poverty is marked by lack of aspirations, hopes, isolation and a growing loneliness with no links to the ‘great world.’ Unlike America’s earlier poor who were massed together in large numbers (immigrant city dwellers) and had identity and power through mass production work, the new poor “do not belong to anybody or anything”

(Harrington, 1962). According to Harrington the only hope in saving the new American poor from the fate of invisibility and untold suffering would be public programs and leadership to raise awareness, motivate and inspire the poor, and build institutional connections to interrupt the cycle of poverty. This kind of solution would require a new kind of poverty ‘expert’ –one who is comfortable making space for, while not controlling ‘the poor’ who primarily suffer from lack of self-worth, voice and political will. McAllister exemplified this new ‘community development’ expert and Self Help Housing the new ‘empowerment’ approach.

While Rosenberg proudly celebrated the success of its self-help funding in a 1965 annual report, it also recognized the reality of the approach’s inherent challenges. Written the same year of the first UFW (then NFWA) strike, the 1965 annual report author warned that while, “Almost everybody approves if farm workers decide to build houses for themselves; not everybody approves if they decide to go on strike.” At the same time as many national self-help projects incubated through the War on Poverty were shut down, redirected, and co-opted after citizen groups made bold claims and demands (Katz 1989, Field Foundation Archives at the Library of American History, University of Texas, Austin), The Rosenberg Foundation drew the lines at strikes and union organizing, as will be discussed in the following section. While the self-help model structured early farmworker leadership it could not control what the leaders did with their newfound power.

### 3. Self-Help for What: Poverty Programming and the Seeds of the Movement

The 1960’s was a tumultuous time and “. . . into this cauldron stepped a barely five foot tall critical mass of energy named Ruth Chance. She roared up and down California seeing people and organizations that were trying to respond to these challenges . . . by the mid 1960s she was in full stride as a social commentator, historian, sociologist and crusader. She persuaded her comfortable board that the Foundation should take chances on courageous, though often unproven, people . . . as a result around a million dollars a year went to places like the San Joaquin Valley . . . .”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Much Remains to be Done: Ruth Chance and California’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Movement for Social Justice*, by Clair Gorfinkel, Rosenberg Foundation 2003.

During Ruth Chance's first five years at Rosenberg she started to build relationship with Latino organizers in the Central Valley, specifically the Tulare Country area in the southern portion of the Valley known as the San Joaquin. At the same time as Cesar and Richard Chavez and Dolores Huerta were traveling the valley, talking to and organizing migrant workers, so were leaders funded by Rosenberg, including McAllister and a small group of farmworker leaders trained by PSYCHON and Self-Help Housing<sup>15</sup>. Talking to people they discovered and documented the many scattered communities with no water, no sewage, poor housing and an emerging worker interest in assessing the problems and fighting for changes. In 1965, with Rosenberg funding the AFSC leaders founded Proyecto Campesino to organize and serve the poorest migrant farmworker communities in Tulare Country. According to several organizers interviewed, the leadership of Proyecto Campesino and the multiple migrant projects in Tulare County were full participants in the early movement campaigns and strikes until Cesar Chavez and the emerging union tightened ranks and limited organizing strategies.<sup>16</sup>

In 1965 tensions were building up to the 1965 rent and grape strikes. Chance increased The Rosenberg Foundation's funding levels to Central Valley farm labor organizing. During this time, an unprecedented amount of foundation funds went to people, organizations and projects organizing farmworkers in and surrounding the San Joaquin Valley town of Visalia. The AFSC PSYCHON and Self-Help Housing projects were flourishing. Kirke Wilson, then a 22 year old volunteer was organizing Tulare Country worker coops to confront the emerging labor contractor and unfair wage systems. AFSC's Bill French, Joe Gunterman, and Isao Fujimoto joined AFSC's Central Valley Farm Committee, also funded by Rosenberg, to investigate and address local farmworker concerns<sup>17</sup>. One of the projects Isao Fujimoto directed was a training for War on Poverty Community Action Projects (CAPS) leaders on how to conduct research for action. Through University Extension (University of California at Davis) he conducted a series of workshops on who owns the agricultural power structures in Tulare County and how to find public records for organizing purposes. Many of these key organizers, including Wilson, Fujimoto, and McAllister were helping the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) form Community Action Projects (CAPS) in the Visalia area to build 'self-help' political participation among

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<sup>15</sup> Interviews with Isao Fujimoto, Graciela Martinez, Kirke Wilson, Pablo Espinoza and Don Villarejo.

<sup>16</sup> The specific organizational decisions or the union will be discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>17</sup> 2007 and 2008 Interviews with Isao Fujimoto

migrant workers. All of these organizing efforts, most of which are never mentioned in histories of the farmworker movement, converged as members from each organization were involved in the 1965 UFW strike.

In the wake of the Tax Reform Act debates that began in 1965 funders concerned with the social movements of the times got a big scare. The tax reform debates that eventually culminated in the Tax Reform Act of 1969 were fueled by critics from both the right and left concerned with the role of private philanthropy in the growing Civil Rights Movement. In this context Chance believed that funding the emerging farmworker movement through 'self-help' leadership programs via the church might be the most strategic approach. Migrant Ministries, an ecumenical farmworker support organization involved in organizing farmworkers alongside AFSC and the emerging NFWA (UFW), became an obvious organization to support. Leaders from Migrant Ministries such as Jim Drake and Chris Hartmeyer were key organizers in the early UFW strikes alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Chance recognized that many church people in the Valley had deep concerns about conditions for farmworkers and that funding Migrant Ministries would support the concerns of a wide array of Valley residents. In keeping with their self-help philosophy, the Migrant Ministry funding from Rosenberg had no predetermined goals. The aim was to develop leadership and for them to decide what the aims would be for the movement.

While Migrant Ministries claimed that they would never take OEO War on Poverty money that would restrict their more militant farmworker organizing and even critiqued the Self-Help Housing model as distracting from movement organizing (Ganz 2008), they did accept several grants from the Rosenberg Foundation. As the World Council of Churches leadership shifted towards the social movements of the day, in 1964 Migrant Ministry committed itself to the emerging farmworker movement and began a fundraising campaign aimed at the National Council of Churches and the Rosenberg Foundation<sup>18</sup>. In 1963 Rosenberg funded Migrant Ministries to organize a Central Valley community development symposium to concretize the self-help 'community development' approach, and also to train farmworker leaders for the movement. Rosenberg continued to fund Migrant Ministries to train farmworker organizers through its Farm Worker-Minister

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<sup>18</sup> Migrant Ministries files from the United Farm Workers archives at Wayne State University.

project through the struggles of early 1965, even as public support withdrew from the movement in response to threats from growers. Chance recalls,

“When we first went into the Migrant Ministry grants we went in jointly with local churches in Valley towns. A foundation is an outsider in the Valley, and so it is far better to join with local people or organizations so that the project has a local constituency . . . the problem arose when the local churches withdrew. Some sincere people changed their minds and some were influenced by pressures from powerful people or interests. But we had made a commitment, and the board decided that it was not going to withdraw from that commitment. Even though some churches withdrew, the Migrant Ministry continued its programs, and our grant had been made to the Ministry, as had the churches . . . some of these local church people, after all, were trades people, or businessmen, or professionals, much of whose livelihood depended on the growers . . . some courageous ministers lost their positions.”<sup>19</sup>

In the summer of 1965 the Tulare County Housing Authority radically increased rents on the tiny metal roofed shacks where many farmworkers lived and NFWA leaders asked Migrant Ministry to assist in a rent strike. By fall Migrant Ministries, AFSC’s Project Campesino, and leaders from the self-help projects of the 1950’s and early ‘60’s were involved in the now famous 1965 grape-pickers strike led by the NFWA and Cesar Chavez. Chance conceded that the Migrant Ministry and the farmworker leaders that benefited from their grants went further than the Foundation was willing to. When Migrant Ministry staff officially joined the grape pickers’ picket lines Rosenberg told the organization that the Foundation’s grant was not to be used for organizing unions. Ruth emphasized that the grants were meant to train leaders and to strengthen ‘farmworker communities’ but whatever the leaders did after they finished the training was their own business. The foundation continued to fund individual services and educational programs. And here is where the ‘self-help’ line was drawn for Rosenberg and the other foundations that invested in the farmworker movement of the 1960’s, as illustrated in the next chapter. Eventually, lines were also drawn between the farmworker leaders and communities who were shaped by the Rosenberg funded ‘Self-Help’ model and the Migrant Ministries-UFW coalition.

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<sup>19</sup> Bay Area Foundation History, Volume II, Ruth Chance, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



## **Conclusion**

Through programs funded by the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation and the War on Poverty CAPS, the conception of ‘self-help’ powerfully shaped the ways in which Central Valley publics understood migrant farmworker poverty, the ways young leaders were trained and mobilized, and the structure of farmworker serving institutions that contributed to the emerging movement. The ‘self-help’ framework initially convinced otherwise cautious public officials and valley stakeholders, such as the school principals and citizen committee members involved in the Tulare County projects, that supporting migrant education and leadership in the early 1960’s was ‘safe’ and would ease ethnic tensions and prevent the ill effect of poverty from damaging agricultural communities. Non-confrontational cross-cultural education, leadership development, and sweat equity infrastructure development were all ways to enlist the poor in helping themselves –to interrupt a ‘cycle of poverty’. The ‘self-help’ approach also structured a new kind of ‘expert’, the community development facilitator- a kind of community worker that increased in popularity in the decades following the movement. The programs and identities promoted through the War on Poverty CAPS and the Rosenberg Foundation grants created a new type of ‘government through community’ (Rose 1999) “whose vectors and forces can be mobilized, enrolled, deployed, in novel programmes and techniques which encourage and harness active practices of self-management and identity construction, personal ethics and collective allegiances.” (Rose, 1999, pp. 176). These programs and frameworks, seldom mentioned in the history of the Farm Worker Movement, gave critical legitimacy, energy, resources, and institutional support to the emerging movement.

However, just as the self-help programs helped fuel and ignite the movement the model also brought clearly defined limits. As has been chronicled for CAP projects across the country, the farmworker self-help model can also be defined not by what it has accomplished but rather by what it cannot achieve. By structuring the actions of the poor around helping themselves attack feelings of isolation, loneliness, marginalization, and powerlessness through processes or ‘technologies of citizenship’ such as leadership development, citizenship education, and infrastructure development attention is drawn away from the capitalist or industrial relationships that rely on deepening global poverty. The ‘historical act of dislocation’ as

Harrington would describe it, or for Marx ‘original appropriation and dislocation’, that throws certain people into a ‘culture of poverty’ is not a one-time event. If this was the case, engaging farmworkers in helping themselves participate in education, leadership training, and bridge building with public institutions might be the most viable solution to farmworker poverty. However, the enduring and in some cases deepening poverty in Central Valley farmworker regions is more accurately described by ongoing processes of appropriation and dislocation –including global competition and financialization in global agricultural markets- that necessitates a permanent low-wage bi-national migrant work force from increasingly impoverished regions in Mexico. Engaging farmworkers in self-help projects might help build motivation and a sense of pride, which is in many ways deeply important. However, this approach structures the actions of participants and ‘experts’ around the fundamental and lasting conception that poverty endures through a cultural cycle of hopelessness and not a system that perpetuates and relies upon it.

Decades of public and private funding and programming around conceptions of self-help and empowerment have both brought resources to farmworker advocates and structured practices of the farmworker ‘leader’, ‘community’, and ‘expert.’ My research revealed that these definitions and practices are not unitary or controlling. Instead they are contested and hotly debated among farmworker organizers and advocates. “What *is* the farmworker *community*? Who is an authentic farmworker *leader*? Which institutions are really organizing farmworkers? Who is going to address the *real issues* migrant workers are facing? These are all questions that a majority of my interview respondents for subsequent chapters asked when reflecting upon the long history of public and private ‘community development’ programming in Central Valley agricultural regions. Some argue that programs and professionals that impose ‘self-help’, ‘empowerment’, or ‘civic participation’ frameworks have so closely structured the actions of institutions, staff, and participants that there is no room for building a base for a new farmworker movement. Others told me that the long history of public and private funding has allowed movement institutions to professionalize and grow into immovable bureaucratic structures that speak for, but are out of touch with and unable to reach new migrant populations. Almost all of the community organizers I interviewed described having their hands tied and their chances for survival structured by the evolving theory and language of self-help community development. Rather than internally

governing their own conduct, farmworker organizations and historic movement leaders find themselves bound by institutional histories, professional practices, and a sharpening competition for 'authentic' farmworker members and leadership. The next chapter picks up where the story of the Rosenberg Foundation and the 1965 strike left off. As the movement exploded on the national stage the farmworker self-help approach gave way to a heightened conflict between building a broad based social movement, social service institutions, and an industrial union.

## Chapter Two

### The Oak or the Mistletoe: Are We Funding a Social Movement or a Union?

#### Introduction

“The farm worker’s movement seems something very special and fine to a great many of us. Probably it means different things to different people . . . to me its great character is its faith in the people and its resolve to see them all live in dignity; and its commitment to non-violence and peace. Those of us who feel this way – and there are many who do – we want to be able to assist without at the same time giving our support to any other economic organization, such as the AFL-CIO or any other national union.” (1969 Letter from Leslie Dunbar of the Field Foundation to Cesar Chavez)<sup>20</sup>

**social movement:** An organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspect or aspects of society. . . . Social movements have specific goals, formal organization, and a degree of continuity . . . they may be revolutionary or reformist; but they have in common the active organization of a group of citizens to change the status quo in some way. Under the broad banner of a social movement . . . many individual social movement organizations (SMOs) may operate in a relatively independent way, sometimes causing confusion and conflict within the movement itself. –Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1998

**trade union:** Any organization of employees established in order to substitute or attempt to substitute, collective bargaining for individual bargaining in the labor market. Unions seek generally to ensure that earnings and conditions are governed by roles applied consistently across their membership. Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1998

The American social movements of the 1960’s produced an unprecedented number of Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) ranging from the student organizations at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, to the legal aid agencies founded to defend and chart new territory in civil rights, to the anti-poverty organizations funded through by the War on Poverty

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<sup>20</sup> UFW File, Field Foundation Archives at The Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin. In the future these archives are called the Field UT Archives.

across the country. While the various types of organizations founded during the American Civil Rights Movement grew out of a diverse range of interests, constituents, leadership, and resources they together converged to create a climate of change and an ethic that society can and must be transformed through collective struggle by the people most negatively impacted by enduring inequality. While many of these organizations worked together, there were also overlapping, sometimes divergent, and sometimes conflicting organizational ideologies and practices. With the rapid incorporation of nonprofit organizations during this era, competition and institutional turf battles intensified. As private funders began to invest in and create new social movement organizations their own ideas and community development 'techniques' contributed to and, in some cases, altered the agenda of regional and national movement campaigns.

For the Farm Worker Movement the self-help approach promoted by War on Poverty Community Action Programs (CAPS) and private funders aligned with the 'community union' vision of UFW founders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, inspired leadership and community action across California's Central Valley. Chavez and Huerta's belief in nonviolence and public statements of ethnic pride and social justice also aligned with the various wings of the Civil Rights Movement, and enabled the broad based public support of the Farm Worker Movement's strikes and table grape boycotts. Yet the coupling and articulation of self-help, community union, ethnic pride, and civil rights ideas and strategies also revealed the central challenges and divisions within the movement and between movement institutions. For the farmworker struggle, the tension between a grassroots community union focused on ideas of self-help, volunteerism, and social services; and the founding of an AFL-CIO affiliated union with a formal bureaucratic leadership structure proved too severe for movement funders and leaders to manage. The Farm Worker Movement faced a particularly unique challenge in that it was the only significant union movement to grow out of a social movement defined by struggles for civil rights and racially equality. It is also perhaps one of the only union movements in the history of the United States to draw its energy and significant resources from such a diverse range of social movement ideas, actors, institutions, and strategies. This chapter is a detailed examination of the conflicting ideas, strategies, and institutional arrangements of a social movement through the lens of its relationship to public and private funders. I argue that the seemingly unified vision of Cesar Chavez to build a community union and social movement for farm workers was torn apart through the diverging interests, ideas, and

strategies employed by funders and the various institutions engaged in the Farm Worker Movement. Ultimately I found that through relationships with funders and processes of formal institutionalization, Chavez' unified theory of social change fractured, ultimately separating the social welfare and leadership of workers from the economic structures that maintain farmworker poverty and powerlessness –the social movement from the union. In the end these divisions and institutional conflicts limited what the movement could achieve.

When private foundations such as the Rosenberg Foundation, the Field Foundation, and the Ford Foundation expressed interest in funding the emerging farmworker movement in California, they made sure that their funds would not contribute to union organizing. Caught up in the spirit of the social movements of the 1960's many funders saw investing in the movement to organize farmworkers as an opportunity to encourage a Latino wing of the Civil Rights Movement. The community service and ethnic pride orientation of the movement set it apart from traditional union organizing, seldom funded by private foundations, and attracted as much as \$300,000 a year in foundation grants at the height of the movement – a significant amount in the 1960's.<sup>21</sup>

Given that foundation endowments are created and maintained by profit made in private industry, it is not surprising that they do not fund labor organizing, despite the deep connection between economic inequality and the social concerns that many foundations seek to address. In fact during the social movements of the 1960's funding lines were often drawn at the economic field. The Black Power Movement's battle for economic self-determination, Martin Luther King's call for a poor people's movement, and many of the citizen projects launched during the War on Poverty were labeled as dangerous and violent causes, and were eventually de-funded, shut, down or co-opted by government officials and private funders (Allen 1969). In many cases, such as the Ford and Field Foundations' involvement in the Voter Education Project, investments in more moderate organizing, such as voter registration, over-shadowed the economic equality aspects of the movement (Garrow 1987).

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<sup>21</sup>Funding and institutional data for this chapter was gathered from interviews with movement leaders and archival research at the United Farm Workers archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University (Foundations Folder, individual foundation folders) and the Field Foundation archives at the Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin (UFW, Farm Labor, Cesar Chavez, and Roger Baldwin Folders).

While patterns of cooptation and control during the movements of the 1960's have been sufficiently documented, a broad theorization of philanthropy as social control hides the sometimes multi-layered and even contradictory goals and actions of movement leaders and institutions themselves, and their proactive efforts to attract foundation funding. Most studies of philanthropy and social control or imperialism (Roelofs 2003, Arnove 1989, Rodriguez 2007) lack an analysis of the internal contradictions within social movements -how the antithesis of change often reveals its own internal shortcomings. My archival research revealed that while Cesar Chavez was angered that funders were unwilling to recognize the deep connection between civil and economic rights or to fund union organizing, he himself was conflicted by the union model. Trained in the Community Service Organization model of organizing religious congregations or neighborhoods into active civic institutions, Chavez considered himself a unique union leader in that he was not a 'union man.' According to my interviews with long-time movement leaders, and confirmed by scholars born out of the movement (Ganz 2008, Pawel 2007<sup>22</sup>), Chavez ultimately considered unions to be rigid institutions, dependent upon industry to set agendas and unable to address the needs of migrant populations. As recalled by a long time farmworker organizer, Chavez once asked an inner circle of UFW leaders, "Are we the oak tree or are we the mistletoe? Do we want to feed off of a strong and solid industry, like the mistletoe that grows on the oak? Do we want to set our limits around negotiating and managing contracts or do we want to build a broader self-sustaining movement?" (Interview with David Villarino, 2008)

Long time movement leaders such as organizer Eliseo Medina and researcher Don Villarejo believe that it was Chavez' abandonment of union organizing and redirection towards building non-profit institutions in the face of an internal institutional crisis and external political threats in the early 1970's that slowed or even halted the movement to change the California farm labor system (Interview with Don Villarejo 2008, Pawel 2007). My archival research confirms this argument and shows how the attraction of private funds to build the movements' non-profit service organizations contributed to this shift. I also show how the separation of economic and social inequality in philanthropic definitions of social

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<sup>22</sup> This article features interviews with historic movement leaders including interviews with Eliseo Medina and Marshall Ganz, December 7, 2007 LA Times, "The Withering of the UFW" by Miriam Pawel.

movements precluded union organizing, land ownership, or worker cooperatives from public and private grants to the movement. In this respect my archival research on the relationship between the farmworker movement and its private funders confirms the expected –that private philanthropy will not fund projects that attempt to make significant changes in the economic sphere. However, I confront a straightforward cooptation and control argument by highlighting the movement’s proactive efforts to attract foundation grants and to establish non-profit institutions. I do this by revealing the sometimes unified and sometimes-conflicting theories of social change promoted by movement leaders and allies as they simultaneously built a social movement, a union, and nonprofit institutions.

Through interviews with movement leaders and archival research at the United Farm Worker archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University and at the Field Foundation archives at the Center for American History at University of Texas, Austin, this chapter shows how federal funding, foundation funding, and a shifting political climate facilitated a separation of the social from the economic, and a shift away from organizing and towards non-profit management. The change was not a sole product of philanthropic investments in the movement, but rather a combination of philanthropic investments, and Cesar Chavez and movement leaders’ strategic decisions to retreat from the agricultural fields to build movement non-profit organizations under the ‘community union’ model fashioned after the CSO philosophy of community service. It was not the community service model itself that changed the nature of the movement- in fact the community service philosophy promotes membership dues and volunteerism over outside ownership of the organizing process. However, in the context of competition with other farmworker serving organizations gaining funds during the War on Poverty, and a series of extreme external and internal challenges in the early 1970’s, the movement turned to the foundation funded non-profit model as a way to re-group, attract new resources and attempt to rebuild the movement. Because foundation grants were available to build the non-profit institutions of the movement, more time, money, and energy was spent on professionalization, program management, and fund development. Cesar Chavez’ role in the social movements of the 1960’s has been much celebrated and recently critically scrutinized (Pawel 2009). My archival research revealed a much more conflicted character and echoes the famous Karl Marx quote, “Men make their own history but not in circumstances of their own choosing.”



I first describe how the community union model that inspired the farmworker movement led by Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta's National Farm Worker Association (NFWA) gained support from the diverse movements of the 1960's, the UAW, and the AFL-CIO, and was transformed into a major labor organization. The next section shows how the American War on Poverty brought new resources and institutions to Central Valley farmworker communities and in the process introduced competition, turf battles, and the politics of philanthropy to the emerging movement. A final section shows how, the movement's relationships with the Ford Foundation and Field Foundation, in particular, facilitated a separation of the economic and social goals of the movement, union organizing from community service, and movement leaders from organizing in the agricultural fields. It is important to note that this chapter is by no means a complete or extensive history of the farmworker movement, but is rather a glimpse into the diverse and sometimes contradictory ideas and strategies within a social movement as revealed through relationship between movement leaders, private foundations, and movement institutions.

### **The Oak or the Mistletoe: from the CSO, to the NFWA, to the UFW**

Cesar Chavez, trained by the Community Service Organization (CSO), spent the early years of the 1960's creating mutual benefit and service organizations in farm worker towns across the Central Valley. The CSO was founded by Fred Ross and was based on the organizing model of Saul Alinsky. By organizing religious congregations and neighborhoods into civic institutions, CSO aimed to build independent democratic community leadership in poor and under-represented communities. Contrary to the concept of a union, organized around a workforce in relationship to a specific industry, community service organizations were place based and used door to door community organizing techniques to elicit the interests and concerns of entire geographic communities, not just workers. In this sense the idea of a community service organization is that it would become a strong self-sustaining institution, like the Oak, and not the Mistletoe, like a union dependent upon industry for its sustenance. Once established, the service organizations would bring people together in what has been described as the 'mutual benefit model' where members help and teach one another, receive services, and build leadership capacity.

In 1962, after leaders of the CSO refused to take up Chavez' proposal to specifically organize farmworkers and the agricultural industry, Chavez brought his family to California's Central Valley to begin building what would become the first successful farmworker movement in the United States. Having studied the failures of past attempts to organize migrant farm labor Chavez believed that organizing workers in a traditional union would never work. Instead, in keeping with his CSO training and inspired by his contemporary Martin Luther King and by Mahatma Ghandi, Chavez sought to organize farmworkers, as a cultural and religious people, situated in their geographic communities, into a social movement. In addition to fighting for higher wages and labor rights, the movement sought to provide farmworker families with services such as health care, housing, life insurance, job training, and a network of community based advocates. They also believed that farmworkers mostly needed dignity, pride, and security in a life that offered very few rewards and much sacrifice.

Central to the organizing philosophy of the movement was the spirit of volunteerism. According to Dolores Huerta, co-director of the National Farm Worker Association (NFWA, later re-named the United Farm Workers) alongside Cesar Chavez, the main organizing principle of the movement was that it was led by an all volunteer, dues paying membership,

From the start, there was a strong belief in not taking money from the outside and in insisting that farmworkers pay and volunteer for the movement. Using the CSO model we also provided services to people: income tax and immigration services. In that day there was no food stamps for farmworkers so we provided food and shelter to people in need. In return we asked for \$3.50 a month. In that time, in the 1960's, that was a lot of money for farmworkers trying to put food on the table, often for family and a roof over their heads. With the dues from our early members that Cesar and I got from organizing door to door for a year, we organized conventions in each community from the comite's in each town. With these funds we also started the paper, El Macreado, the Group Term Insurance program, the Credit Union, and a tire sales coop. (Interview with Dolores Huerta, October 2007)

In the beginning Chavez and Huerta proposed that union dues and membership would assure that the movement was owned and led by the

people. According to early union advocate, Don Villarejo (Interview with Don Villarejo, 2008), the early NFWA, “would not take a dime of money from outside their own pockets and if there was any money or meaning in the movement it had to be based in workers.” According to Villarejo and other farmworker leaders interviewed, from 1962 to 1964 Chavez and Huerta were traveling door to door up and down the Valley, organizing house meetings night and day, recruiting members, and asking new members to pay \$5.75 a month in dues. They also recalled that in the beginning the NFWA leaders were very Catholic, anti-communist, and initially against strikes and unions. By 1964 the NFWA had 1,000 members. Throughout the 1960’s NFWA members, alongside organizers paid as little as \$5 a day, included door to door organizing, engaged in efforts to build labor cooperatives that set hiring and wage practices, service centers that provide health, legal, and educational opportunities for workers, public communications campaigns using arts and media to convey pride and dignity in farm work, business coops in car repair, organic gardening, and leadership and job training programs for workers.

In the earliest days of the 1960’s Cesar Chavez did not imagine that union contracts would be won by a farmworker organization or that union organizing would become the main focus of the movement. However, in 1964, while Chavez, his brother Richard, and Dolores Huerta were knocking on doors and organizing farmworkers into local service groups across the Central Valley, the mostly Filipino American members of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) walked out on strike against grape growers in the Delano area. When AWOC asked Chavez’ mostly Latino National Farm Worker Association to join them, the NFWA was unexpectedly thrown into a five year grape strike. In the course of just a few short months in 1964, the NFWA’s campaign to build service centers and mutual benefit organizations was transformed into a large-scale strike and union campaign in the grape fields of Delano. What was at first a dogged door-to-door community building effort by a small team of visionary leaders quickly became the largest union movement of its time.

Cesar Chavez quickly rose to the occasion and became a spokesperson for the strike, both in the fields and nationally. Chavez was a strategic leader and during the 1965 strike did not advocate for farmworkers to be included in the National Labor Relations Board (like many past union leaders had fought for) because under the NLRB consumer boycotts were excluded. It was for this reason that Chavez was able to successfully launch a consumer

boycott of grapes and catapult the farmworker struggle to the national stage. As Chavez' public statements of social justice, non-violence, and ethnic pride attracted support from a diversity of union, student, church, and civil rights activists from across the country, the consumer boycott became international and lasted for five years. The same year as Chavez launched the grape boycott, the president of the United Auto Workers, Walter Reuther, came to Delano and decided to financially back the strike. With financial support from the UAW, the NFWA began a boycott of the major wine grape grower Shenley Industries.

Throughout the spring of 1966 the grape boycott gained support across the country. Inspired by Chavez' social justice message, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, a fellow Catholic, joined the picket lines, and striking farmworkers embarked on a highly publicized 'pilgrimage' from the grape fields of Delano to the state capitol in Sacramento.<sup>23</sup> During the march Shenley agreed to negotiate with the NFWA and the union won its first contract. The union responded by striking additional grape growers, including DeGiorgio Fruit Corporation and Guimarra Vineyards Corporation. When DiGiorgio brought in the more industry friendly Teamsters to oppose Chavez NFWA, the AWOC and UFW merged to form the United Farm Workers of America as an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. After the merger the DiGiorgio workers voted in the UFW.

Between 1965 and 1967, public and private funders interested in supporting the farmworkers were attracted to its' community service philosophy that worked alongside the self-help programming of the War on Poverty and its' social justice spirit that worked alongside the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement. However most funders were cautious about the movement's growing union organizing capacity and affiliations. The UFW's first large grant, outside of union and individual donations from across the country, was from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The first years of the Delano grape strike were also the beginning years of the War on Poverty and an unprecedented amount of public spending on regional poverty in the United States. President John F. Kennedy first introduced the rhetoric of addressing chronic poverty in the United States. After Kennedy's

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<sup>23</sup> During the 1965 strike when growers sprayed striking workers with pesticides, Chavez organized a protest march from Delano to Sacramento. The pilgrimage or peregrination was led with a banner of the Virgin De Guadalupe a symbol of the apparition of the Virgin Mary for the predominantly Catholic and Mexican protestors. The march arrived in Sacramento on an east Sunday and marchers attended mass Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

assassination in 1964, President Johnson took up Kennedy's cause and called for an, "unconditional war on poverty in America," and pronounced, "(We) shall not rest until that war is won" (Piven and Cloward 1977). That same year Johnson proposed the Economic Opportunity Bill to Congress, which, when passed, launched the War on Poverty. The War on Poverty was managed through the newly created Office of Economic Opportunity and included funding for Community Action Projects (CAPs) to encourage the 'Maximum Feasible Participation of the Poor', as described in the previous chapter.

Initially, key leaders of the farmworker movement promised to never seek grants from public or private agencies that they believed might co-opt a more radical worker owned movement. Despite its own funding from the National Council of Churches and the Rosenberg Foundation, Migrant Ministry, NFWA's major ally in the strikes, even argued that publicly and privately funded housing and infrastructure programs, such as the AFSC projects described in the previous chapter, risked co-opting advocacy and organizing (Ganz 2008). Regardless of the moral and political stance against outside funds, when movement leaders found out that multiple farmworker advocacy organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee, were receiving large grants from the War on Poverty's Office of Economic Opportunity, they changed their minds. According to Gilbert Padilla, interviewed by Marshall Ganz, both lead organizers during the heat of the movement, Cesar Chavez feared that,

"If the NFWA did not get the OEO funds, others would who might not share the NFWA's organizing agenda . . .and by reversing itself on rejection of outside money, the NFWA tried to preempt claims of others who might use funds in less productive ways." (Ganz, p. 280)

Competition with other farmworker serving organizations in the Central Valley and the unprecedented financial investment in fighting rural poverty by the newly established Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) influenced the decision of NFWA leaders to seek significant amounts of both public and private funds. In an attempt to prevent other organizations from distracting from the core organizing goals of the strike, and to prevent other organizations from attracting volunteer leaders and organizers, the NFWA took an active interest in the broader War on Poverty. In 1965, just one year after claiming that public funds would corrupt a volunteer led farmworker movement, the NFWA applied for an OEO grant for \$500,000 and Cesar

Chavez and Dolores Huerta attended a Washington DC anti-poverty conference and began work with then Governor Jerry Brown to attract \$3.5 million in federal funds to set up migrant service centers across the state. In October of 1965 the OEO awarded the union a grant of \$270,00 for leadership development, civic education and service centers for migrant farmworkers. However, funders did not realize that their grant was being made during the heat of a major strike, and when the grant was announced, public protest was engineered by major grower associations and pressured a postponement of the grant.

According to Marshall Ganz, who chronicles the ‘strategic capacity’ of the UFW movement to garner unlikely allies and talents (Ganz 2008), the OEO officer informed Chavez that in the face of public protest, he could choose to run a poverty program and receive the \$270,000 grant or organize a strike, but not both. Ganz argues that Chavez decided that the concepts of collective bargaining and union recognition were more important than the grant and informed the OEO officer that he would not accept the grant until the strike was over. It is Ganz’ argument that if there had been no grape strike to prevent the OEO grant, Chavez’ NFWA might have become a service agency like the others agencies who accepted OEO funds. However, Ganz also recounts how the movement was not initially understood as union drive, but rather about the Mexican traditions of mutual support (Ganz 2008). Chavez and the NFWA utilized the “moral resources” of the Mexican tradition and “huelga priests” to engage migrant workers who understood the cultural practice of helping extended family through self-help and service, but not necessarily the benefits of unionization.

Here a common contradiction emerges; the success of the movement would rely on a dedication to union organizing, yet union organizing was not at the heart of the vision and philosophy of Cesar Chavez, the movement’s leader. This contradiction is particularly revealing in the movement’s relationship to private and public funders. In the remainder of this chapter I show the various ways in which public and private funders took advantage of the dual service-union strategy as they attempted to separate union organizing from a social movement, union litigation from social service, and ultimately social from economic inequity. Faced by internal and external crisis, a retreat to the social sphere served as a re-grouping for a seriously worn down and stressed movement in the mid 1970’s.

## **The War on Poverty: a resource or a distraction?**

My archival research and interviews revealed that the eventual 1967 OEO grant to the NFWA actually went towards farmworker organizer training during the heat of the grape strikes and a growing national boycott, and not towards managing poverty programs or services. So while I found that OEO funding itself did not re-direct the union away from organizing, there is significant evidence that the OEO hampered the broader movement by separating various wings of the movement from one another, by restricting well-funded poverty agencies across the Central Valley from directly contributing to the strikes and worker organizing, and ultimately introducing the movement to philanthropic non-profit models that prohibited programming in the economic sphere. According to a farmworker organizer who left the union to work with an OEO Community Action Project (CAP) in 1966,

The CAP kept us separated from the movement. They paid big salaries and most people stayed on. But they tried to keep me away from the strikes and the action. So I eventually left the CAP after a lot of ‘sneaking out to do real organizing’ (Interview with Pablo Espinoza, November 2006)

Between 1965 and 1967 the OEO attracted farmworker leaders to work with federally funded poverty organizations across the Central Valley. The new organizations presented a dilemma to the growing union movement that relied on a limited pool of volunteers and resources. Would these new federally funded programs distract leadership from and corrupt the movement as originally hypothesized by Chavez and Migrant Ministries? Or might they bring new talent, energy and funds to a rapidly expanding movement? My archival research revealed how the union recognized the assets of the new poverty programs and attempted to attract poverty workers to the movement. I also found that while initially attracted to the Valley by the farmworker movement, the young and energetic staff employed by OEO projects was eventually prohibited from having any relations with the union. Ultimately, the War on Poverty brought important resources to the movement but also introduced organizational turf battles and competition over limited financial and human resources that still exist today (and is one of the main topics of chapters four and five).

The Central Valley War on Poverty's Community Action Projects (CAPS) were dominated by the American Friend's Service Committee (AFSC) staff and affiliates in Tulare County (Interview with Isao Fujimoto 2008, Interview with Kirke Wilson, 2008). With a long history in serving and organizing poor and migrant populations, as described in the previous chapter, including Rosenberg Foundation funded projects, AFSC leaders were logical contacts for OEO officials looking to found CAPS. According to the OEO's requirement of 'Maximum Feasible Participation' of the poor, local committees with an even 1/3 split between officials, people from city organizations, and the poor shaped the ideas for each CAP. The CAP programs, ranging from youth services, to daycare, to migrant health and legal services, were managed by local volunteers farmworker leaders and paid poverty staff.

According to Kirke Wilson, president of the Rosenberg Foundation from 1976-2002 and past farmworker organizer, the OEO was impressed with the Tulare CAPS and hoped to replicate their active engagement of the poor in other counties. What they found out later was that the Tulare CAPS were particularly successful because a large pool of talent, including an array of students and young idealists, were attracted to Visalia (a hub city in the agricultural Tulare County) to get involved in the emerging NFWA/UFW movement. Many of these young activists, students, and volunteers could not figure out how to join the NFWA movement and turned to the CAPS as a way to get involved. As the strikes heated up in 1965 local growers became suspicious of the involvement of the US government (OEO) in fueling the strikes. Under pressure from the growers and their political allies, including then Governor Ronald Reagan, the OEO began to reign in CAP staff eager to join the strikes and vetoed poverty funding across the region that had anything to do with organizing farmworkers or supporting the union.

A key example of the growing conflicts between the NFWA and the War on Poverty projects was with the OEO founded California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA). Founded in 1966 with an OEO grant to provide legal services to California's rural poor, CRLA was an immediate resource and ally to the farmworker movement. However, while many of the original CRLA staff was eager to help build the union movement, the OEO made it clear that CRLA must separate their own work on behalf of farmworkers from any union negotiations with growers or support of union members as a part of a union case. As the strikes intensified and contracts were gained the union needed additional legal assistance and some CLRA staff's



involvement blurred the lines between the poverty organization and the union. As a result leadership from the poverty programs required staff to pull back from supporting the Union. In February of 1967 James D. Lorenz, the Director of CRLA, wrote a three-page letter to Cesar Chavez to clarify the lines between the work of an OEO organization and the union,

Dear Cesar:

Despite our meeting on February 8, when, for the first time we talked about what CRLA could and could not do for farmworkers in California, I have the feeling that there have been a number of problems which are likely to persist between you and ourselves, unless we bring them out on the table.

The main problem is a lack of clarification about the things we can and can't do. Because of this, Carol Silver has been fearful of having any personal contact with members of your Union, even though I don't feel that that approach is necessary. As a result of this, there has been a good deal of suspicion growing between some of the Union members, such as Jim Drake and LeRoy Chatfield, and our McFarland office. From some of the things LeRoy has told Gary, I gather they feel that our McFarland office and the rest of the organization don't give a damn about the Union.

Also as a result of the lack of clear-cut policy, Jerry Cohen, our other attorney in McFarland, has constantly pushed Carol to "give help to the Union." Although I believe Jerry was informed of the fact that we can't represent the Union. I think he came to McFarland with the hope that he could somehow help and, I gather, he is having some difficulty in living with the restrictions, which CRLA is imposing. Perhaps Jerry would be happier working for you, rather than for us.

Several days ago, one of your people said to me that CRLA is no better than any other poverty organization. I don't think that's true but at the same time, I know that he feels cheated because we are not representing you in negotiations with growers, and we are not bringing lawsuits on the Union's behalf. That's correct and must continue that way, much as I personally

sympathize with what you are doing. That was a part of the original understanding with the OEO, an understanding that you were willing to go along with. If I remember correctly, at the time our grant was approved, you told me that it was good farmworkers all over the State would be benefitted, even though the Union would not be directly helped.<sup>24</sup>

Lorenz understood that the UFW leadership both rejected the poverty program and federal funding model and wanted to utilize the new organizing and legal talent brought to the region through poverty programs. While the OEO had poverty program directors hands tied from directly supporting the movement, they could not control individual leaders like Pablo Espinoza and Jerry Cohen who refused to recognize the lines between movement organizing and poverty services, between a legal service agency and a union. Frustrated with the limits drawn by the OEO yet cognizant of the value the poverty programs staff brought to the movement, Chavez continued to lobby for federal funding for CRLA, in the hopes of keeping the young legal talent in the Central Valley. Only four months after the letter from Lorenz to Chavez, Chavez wrote a letter to his long time ally Robert F. Kennedy asking that OEO funds continue to support the young attorney's working with CRLA., citing the many ways in which CLRA staff has helped the movement:

The Tulare County Housing Authority recently issued an order to tenants of the Woodville-Linnel Labor Camps to vacate their tin cabins. One of the attorneys in the McFarland Office of CRLA was able to secure a restraining of this action which would have left the workers homeless. He was also able to restrain the Housing Authority from building public housing which would have been out of the reach, financially speaking, of farm workers. (Letter to Robert F. Kennedy from Cesar Chavez, July 1967, Box 39, Folder, Kennedy, Robert F., WSU Archives).

As a social movement leader, not a 'union man', Chavez utilized the many resources available through the War on Poverty and social movements of the time. While the lines were drawn between the organizations in terms of staff

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<sup>24</sup>Letter from James Lorenz to Cesar Chavez, February, 1967, Box 60, Folder 60-12, WSU Archives.

time, CRLA and the UFW became close allies in the battles against growers throughout the late 1960's. In 1969 the UFW-CRLA partnership gained national attention in articles in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal<sup>25</sup> after winning several class action suits against growers, including a suit against a mushroom grower for hiring 'illegal' workers while locals remained unemployed, a suit that forced farmers to pay a minimum wage of \$1.65 an hour (at the time the highest agricultural wage in the country), and a case that prohibited growers from dismissing workers for union activity. And even though, according to this reporting, OEO officials considered CRLA as the prototype of what an activist legal services program should be, California politicians rallied by angry growers, attempted numerous times to shut the program down. Governor Ronald Reagan threatened to veto the program in 1968 but backed off when the OEO director, Sargent Shriver, made it clear that he would over-ride the veto.

Even though the UFW was able to successfully partner with War on Poverty organizations like CRLA, the growing need to staff official union organizing and contract negotiation made the UFW increasingly protective of its own leadership and competitive over funds and human resources. For example, Jerry Cohen, the CRLA attorney mentioned in both the letter to Senator Kennedy above and from Lorenz of CRLA was eventually recruited to work with the NFWA/UFW with a foundation grant from the Field Foundation, which will be discussed later. In 1967 Chavez, in partnership with Migrant Ministries, also publically convinced the California Center for Community Development, another OEO spin-off, to recruit volunteers for the NFWA (War on Poverty files in the United Farm Workers of America Archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University). And while poverty organizations were concerned about their staff working on behalf of the Union, the UFW was equally clear on prohibiting their own volunteer workers from joining OEO projects. In a 1967 letter to the director of the Central California Action Associates Inc (CCAA), another War on Poverty program, Cesar Chavez wrote,

It has come to my attention on several occasions that your staff people have been soliciting assistance from our staff and permission to attend our meetings in the San Joaquin Valley. I would like to advise you that the policy of our union is that no other local group is permitted to

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<sup>25</sup> "Workers Accept Grape Talk Offer," June 11, 1969, *The Wall Street Journal* and "California Official Takes Steps to Ban use of 2 Pesticides," June 15, 1969, *The New York Times*.

make any arrangements, financial or otherwise, without consulting the head office first. If you need assistance, please request same throughout the paper channels. I would greatly appreciate it if your staff would not infringe on the time of our farm workers.<sup>26</sup>

It makes strategic sense that Chavez would attempt to keep volunteer leaders focused on the strike, the boycott, and the union, and away from meetings and organizational activities that risk draining the limited time and resources available to farmworkers. However some of the poverty agencies, such as the CCAA were fighting *against* OEO vetoes to *join* the movement for farmworkers and were dismayed when Chavez began to tighten control and ownership over members. According to my interviews with movement leaders, while the pre-strike days were organized around a loose mutual benefit service model with no formal structure, after the strike went public, Chavez and a small group of preacher activists from Migrant Ministries who had been involved from the beginning, redirected decision making away from workers and towards a central bureaucratic leadership. According to Kirke Wilson, Don Villarejo and anonymous farmworker organizers interviewed, after the 1965 strike original allies from the Visalia CAPS and worker members of the union were excluded from any internal decision-making or leadership. Caught up in the strike and the newly gained contracts, and in keeping with the original CSO model to build institutions with dedicated membership, the partnership between the union and Migrant Ministries transformed the broad-based nature of the movement into a growing institution with closely guarded members, leadership and loyalties.

### **CAPs Under Attack: the Citizen Crusade Against Poverty and the Ford Foundation**

The Union leaders knew very well that they could not rely on sustained partnerships with CAPS and OEO organizations that were increasingly under attack by local grower associations, state politicians, and national lobbying groups. An example of the situation farmworker serving CAPS found themselves in between 1967-68 comes from Don Waite, the director of the CCAA that Chavez wrote to in 1967. Waite made an executive statement about his commitment to the movement and his belief that the

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<sup>26</sup>Letter to Don Waite from Cesar Chavez, September 27, 1967, Box 63, Folder 63-11, WSU Archives.

OEO is unfairly vetoing programs associated with ‘Chavez’s union’ under political pressures from growers and Reagan,

I would like to publicly state to the board members as well as the general citizenry of the San Joaquin Valley . . . It is my intention to operate an effective and program that will be beneficial to the farm workers. I cannot, however, suppress my feelings about the intention of the recent administrative review. I stated before, both in person and by letter, that in my opinion, the review was prompted by political pressure. I am not so naïve to accept the statements made by glib politicians that OEO is apolitical. Politics, unfortunately, is the order of the day for OEO. Pressures and counter pressures are determining factors in which programs are funded, refunded, or “vetoed”. The games people in OEO are playing with other people’s lives is horrifying . . . We constantly speak of “Maximum Feasible Participation of the Poor”, as though by mouthing of the words we involve our poor citizens. As soon as our poor participate in maximum strength we see what the words mean. Absolutely nothing. Governors purportedly are engaged in a “veto-race” . . . the CCAA program is just beginning. I personally think our future is bright, but I can see the thunderstorms gathering. Just this week I was asked these questions: Isn’t everyone on CCAA staff a member of Chavez’s union? Did your staff members collect some money for the hungry (striking) families in Delano? . . . These questions were presented as being fact by Washington officials who are supposedly open-minded.<sup>27</sup>

As Central Valley poverty workers were radicalized and launched serious critiques against the OEO in an effort to join the growing social movement, the UFW continued to solidify a small non-farmworker leadership team. (Zerzan 1972). Eventually pressure from farmers, school boards, welfare departments, and citizen groups fearful of the activities the CAPs mounted, the OEO vetoed the most radical and poor people run poverty programs across the Central Valley and across the nation.

Serious critiques of the War on Poverty were also made by CAP participants, advocates of the poor, and even OEO staff dissatisfied with the

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<sup>27</sup> Executive Policy Statement by Donald Waite of the Central California Action Associates, Inc., October 6, 1967, Box 63, Folder 63-11, WSU Archives.

direction the program was taking. As early as 1966 a small group of poor people advocates, including UFW allies Walter Reuther (President of the United Auto Workers), Senator Robert Kennedy, and disillusioned OEO director Richard Boone convened a large number of religious, civil rights, labor, academic, and philanthropic organizations to build a new poverty organization to confront the OEO and support the kind of poor people's movement the OEO was increasingly backing out of. With a start-up grant from the Ford Foundation, Reuther and Boone founded the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP) and recruited movement leaders including Dolores Huerta, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bayard Rustin to sit on the board.<sup>28</sup>

CCAP advocates were particularly angered that under President Johnson, millions of War on Poverty funds were being transferred from neighborhood legal, health, and migrant services to Department of Labor job training programs. According to one CCAP official, "OEO is the only agency which has the authorizing legislation and the desire on the part of its officials to diffuse power – place it in the hands of the people . . . now the programs are being placed in the hands of an apparatus which places a premium on centralizing the power within the government."<sup>29</sup> It is in this context that the CCAP turned away from the government and towards private foundations. With a \$4 million dollar four-year commitment from the Ford Foundation, the CCAP sought to provide funds to train community workers to help the poor to organize for sustained funds from the OEO and to participate more effectively in the War on Poverty. A grant from the CCAP was the first introduction to private foundations for many movement organizations, including the UFW.

A CCAP grant to the UFW in 1967 introduced the Farm Worker Movement to program staff at both the Ford Foundation and the Field Foundation, its major funders from 1967 through the early 1970's. Headed up by Reuther, CCAP granted the UFW \$200,000 to train emerging farmworker leaders across the Central Valley through the UFW's then un-incorporated National Farm Worker Service Center (NFWSC). The UFW hired Fred Ross (CSO founder and long time mentor to Chavez) to develop and implement a training program where farmworker leaders would learn how to organize and represent farmworkers to local agencies, and to establish the NFWSC as a viable institution to serve the needs of local farmworker groups in

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<sup>28</sup>Crusade on Poverty Starting Training Program," National Civic Review, November 1966.

<sup>29</sup> "Poverty War Shift to Job Programs Stirs "Politics' Cry," by Robert Walters, *The Evening Star*, Washington D.C., Thursday, January 25, 1968.

providing services, and developing credit unions, cooperatives, and other self-sustaining community ventures.<sup>30</sup>

After only one year of the UFW/NFWSA Fred Ross training program, the CCAP informed the UFW that the Ford Foundation was ending funding to CCAP. Instead the Ford Foundation was forming a new organization called the Center for Community Change (CCC) to absorb OEO and CCAP related projects (UFW Letter to Board in 1967, Field Foundation Archives, Center for American History, UT, Austin). By 1968 the CCAP was in battle to keep alive the remaining CAPs across the country that truly involved and served the poor, including Head Start and the highly contested Child Development Group of Mississippi which after electing an all black board of directors, was receiving threats from the KKK and an OEO veto.<sup>31</sup>

The Ford Foundation's involvement in incorporating citizen action groups precedes the War on Poverty. As early as 1955 the Ford Foundation's Model Cities and then Gray Areas programs funded and incorporated neighborhood activist groups fighting downtown urban renewal, smoothed tensions that mounted during the civil rights movement and eventually paved the way for downtown development (Domhoff 2005). While there were many program officers at Ford, including Paul Yvisklar, that claimed to support the inner city black activists and civil rights organizing of the late 1950's through the 1960's, the Ford Foundations investments in the Model Cities, to Gray Areas, to the Great Society programs of the War on Poverty, ended up managing and calming urban and movement unrest. In the case of the United Farm Workers, funding from Ford and other private foundations solidified the service center and institution building approach of the UFW and in the process provided an easy retreat from organizing in the face of crisis.

Of course 1968, the year that the poverty programs were turned over to other federal departments or the Ford Foundation's Center for Community Change, was also a violent and tragic year. With the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy, an escalating war in Vietnam, and riots across the country, leaders of the civil rights and farmworker causes felt a cresting of the movement. The farmworker movement in particular lost two key allies and friends, MLK and RFK, just when they needed them most. Between 1967 and 1970 hundreds of UFW

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<sup>30</sup> Evidence from CCAP File, Field UT Archives.

<sup>31</sup> CCAP files in the Field UT Archives.

strikers, volunteers, and allies toured the country advocating for farmworkers and the growing 'La Causa.' In the violent year of 1968 grape strikers in the Central Valley threatened to turn to violence. In response, Chavez fasted for 25 days to redirect the movement towards peace and non-violence. Just months before he was shot, Martin Luther King sent Chavez a message of solidarity. Chavez remained weak after his fast, but continued to promote the boycott internationally and in this same year dedicated all of his staff to Robert Kennedy's Democratic Primary campaign for President up until the day he was also shot. Movement organizer, Marshall Ganz has said that Kennedy was such an important ally to the farmworker movement in introducing their cause to both the civil rights movement and mainstream politicians, that the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy in 1968 ultimately took the wind out of Chavez' sails.

While the grape boycott launched in 1968 was gaining international attention serious blows had been made to the movement. Chavez' health was in poor condition after the fast, the UFW's lost an important ally in Senator Kennedy, and the national climate of violence inspired fierce attacks and repression in the hands of growers and government. The Teamsters Union also returned as a major rival in winning contracts with farms in the fields of California. The Teamsters, known to negotiate more relaxed contracts with no housing or pesticide clauses and a lower minimum wage, were moving in on expiring UFW contracts. By 1971 the UFW became more distant from the fields (Martin 2003, Zerzan 1972, Villarejo and Wells 2004) and re-located from Delano to a retreat location outside of Bakersfield called La Paz. It was at La Paz where Chavez and a central group of movement leaders and family members incorporated the National Farm Worker Service Center as a 501 © 3 organization and eventually seven additional 'movement organizations' funded by private foundations. The forming of these institutions further complicated an already separated movement.

### **“The Hustling Arm of the Union”: The National Farm Worker Service Center**

The National Farm Worker Service Center (NFWSC) was established in 1966 by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, in keeping with the original CSO and community union model, to provide services, training and educational programs to farm worker families. The NFWSC's first large grant was through the Ford Foundation for the CCAP organizer-training program.



When the CCAP folded into the CCC, the UFW's still non-incorporated NFWSC was required to report to the Ford Foundation with the CCC as an evaluator and grant monitor. It was not until the incorporation of the NFWSC as a non-profit organization in late 1969, the same year as the highly contested Tax Reform Act, that the NFWSC was able to receive funds directly from a private foundation without the conduit, monitoring and evaluation of an intermediary like the CCC. It was in order to receive foundation grants that the NFWSC incorporated, but it did not initially anticipate how this process would draw strict lines between the social service work from union and economic justice organizing. This next section shows how the UFW's relationship with the Field Foundation, in particular, paved the way for the retreat to non-profit institutions and away from organizing—a space that became all too comfortable when crisis arose within movement leadership and in the fields.

In this section I first show how the Field and Ford foundations were attracted to the 'community union' philosophy of the movement but refused to fund union or labor organizing activity. This line was drawn immediately. Correspondence between Cesar Chavez, foundation program officers, and policy makers reveals how Chavez initially did not accept the separation of social and economic justice work and confronted foundation staff on their unwillingness to see the connections between assisting the poor and the right to join unions, strike, and negotiate union contracts. A temporary compromise was made by funding a legal services program for migrant workers, fashioned after the Civil Rights Movement's legal services programs, but did not last when foundation officials discovered that their grants were being matched by AFL-CIO funds and re-asserted their resistance to funding any union related activities.

The eventual solution proposed by the Ford and Field Foundations was for the United Farm Workers to incorporate the National Farm Worker Service Center as a non-profit organization where grants could be received for solely service and educational purposes. This transition came at a time of great conflict for foundations (Tax Reform Act of 1969<sup>32</sup>) and for the movement, and the NFWSC became a safe retreat for an increasingly embattled UFW. Only two years after its founding Chavez described the purpose of the NFWSC as the 'hustling arm of the union' in that they could attract an increasing amount of philanthropic funds (Reuther Archives, Meeting

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<sup>32</sup> The Tax Reform debates and act are described in Chapter One and later on in this chapter.

Minutes from NFWSC). However, by this time the management of the NFWSC and the property at La Paz was taking up an enormous amount of time, and by many accounts, became a retreat from union organizing for an increasingly weak, fearful, and distracted Chavez and divided movement.

### **The Field Foundation and the Incorporation of the National Farm Worker Service Center**

The Field Foundation was founded in 1940 in New York City by Marshall Field III, grandson of a major merchant who came to Chicago in the 1800s. Field III eventually went into the bond business and during the Great Depression decided to use his wealth to assist people struggling in poverty. He also endorsed many New Deal policies and supported activists and progressive thinkers. In the 1940s, Field also founded the *Chicago Sun*, which became the *Chicago Sun-Times*. In creating the Field Foundation, "Field III wanted the foundation to create "a few ideas and social techniques [that may] germinate and eventually prove to be of enough value to be adopted by the community." (Field Foundation website, 2008). Throughout the 1950's and 1960's the Field Foundation funded many social movement organizations focusing specifically on youth, families, and racial and social justice. After Field III's death, the foundation was divided into two separate entities: the Field Foundation of New York, and the Field Foundation of Illinois. By 1989 the Field Foundation of New York fully spent its assets and closed, ending funding commitments to long time grantees including the NFWSC. Between 1967-69 the Field Foundation granted the NFWSC \$85,000. Between 1972 and 1976 the foundation granted the NFWSC over \$200,000.

In 1968 Richard Boone, co-founder of the CCAP alongside Walter Reuther, became director of the newly founded CCC and eventually became the Executive Director of the Field Foundation. Like many of the social movement organizations of the 1960's, the UFW followed the OEO, to the CCAP, to the CCC, to the Ford Foundation, and the Field Foundation. The first UFW appeal to the Field Foundation came as early as 1966 in a pitch to Richard Boone's ally in poverty programming, Edgar Cahn. Cahn drafted legislation for Johnson's War on Poverty and was particularly influential in encouraging the participation of the poor in the programs that serve them. Cahn's 1966 letter to Field Foundation Executive Director Leslie Dunbar shows how Cahn believed that private funders might assist the farmworker movement.

A December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966 Memo to Field Foundation Program Officer, Leslie Dunbar titled, “Chavez’ need for “his own” Marian Wright<sup>33</sup>” is a five page plea to fund a legal team or “house counsel for Chavez and Co.,” Cahn first spells out the unique vision of Chavez’ ‘community union’,

In contrast to the traditional bases of union organization – a trade, a plant, or an industry – the base here will be the geographical neighborhood or multi-neighborhood. The purpose of the community union will be to provide a means for people with presently inadequate means to raise their standards of living, to secure more responsive and comprehensive human services within their communities, and to exercise a proportionate share of democratic power.”<sup>34</sup>

Cahn then listed characteristics of a community union, including that it will be: limited to a defined geographical area, be governed by local residents, will mesh trade union functions with community service and programming, will mobilize outside resources including governmental and private funding, and outside citizen review committees to evaluate and monitor the union activity. The community union, according to Cahn, would, like the Community Development Corporations (CDC) of the inner city and the rural south (also a product of Ford Foundation intervention in inner city conflict), “attempt to stabilize the fluid labor market picture of the migrant workers by adaptation of the ‘community corporation’ concept that Milt Kotler, Robert Kennedy and others have been exploring.” In other words it would provide an institutional and program oriented basis for organizing disenfranchised groups of people.

It is not clear who asked Cahn to write the letter to Dunbar, if Cesar Chavez and the union agreed with Cahn’s definition of a community union, or if in fact Cesar Chavez wrote the letter and asked Cahn to send it. It is unlikely that Chavez would compare the farmworker movement to a CDC given that it was wary of being owned by governmental or outside resources. It was also known that Chavez was consolidating leadership and not expanding citizen accountability groups during this time (as discussed earlier).

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<sup>33</sup> Cahn is referring to Marion Wright Edelman, legal advocate for the Child Development Group of Mississippi and future founder of the Children’s Defense Fund. Cahn is wishing for a similarly catalytic legal advocate for Cesar Chavez’ growing movement.

<sup>34</sup>Letter from Edgar Cahn to Leslie Dunbar, December 10, 1966, Field UT Archives.

However, it is likely that Chavez would seek help in resourcing legal staff since CRLA was under attack by Reagan and the OEO for supporting the union. Whether Chavez asked Cahn to write the letter or not, Cahn's plea to Dunbar includes a discussion about how he hopes that Field and other private funders might be able to help the union out of the legal bind it has found itself in with the OEO restricting the legal work of CRLA, including prohibiting them from: providing advice on union contracts, work on the National Labor Relations Board, picketing, cases of union members, and training lay advisors and organizers on legal rights.

It is also evident that Cahn opened the door for a three year conversation between Cesar Chavez and Field Foundation Director Leslie Dunbar that exposed the lines that funders drew in funding the movement and the impact these limitations had on the future direction of the UFW. Even before Dunbar and Chavez began direct correspondence with one another, the concerns of the foundation were made clear. In the margins of Cahn's 1966 letter Dunbar scrawled<sup>35</sup>,

1. why a "union"?
2. relation to other labor?
3. operates from labor membership?

When Cahn gets to the actual pitch for Field Foundation sponsorship of a 'house counsel for Chavez' including, "one full time lawyer (or legal intern), one summer law student intern, one secretary plus such office equipment, books, etc." in his letter, Dunbar is not convinced and writes "no" in the margins. "No" is also scribbled in the margins next to Cahn's suggested next steps including a request for "between thirty to forty-five thousand dollars" and a meeting with Walter Reuther and Chavez to discuss a budget. There is no documented correspondence between Dunbar and Cahn after this letter, so it is hard to know what kind of conversation they may have had. However, one month later, on January 30, 1967, Dunbar responds to a January 19<sup>th</sup> letter from Chavez, with a CC to Edgar Cahn, explaining,

Dear Mr. Chavez:

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<sup>35</sup>Chavez File, Field UT Archives.

We have your letter of January 19. As I told you when we talked, I do not know what we can do with this, but I shall do the best I can to get you an early answer.

I suppose I did not truly realize until I saw your letterhead that you were fully affiliated with the AFL-CIO. I wonder what success you have had or could reasonably anticipate in securing the necessary assistance from the AFL-CIO.

I enjoyed very much talking with you and hope that we may have an opportunity to meet some day.

Sincerely yours, Leslie

Dunbar<sup>36</sup>

Dunbar's response to Cahn's pitch and Dunbar's letter to Chavez show how the movements resemblance, connections, and work to support unionization initially made it 'un-fundable' to private foundations. At the risk of quoting at great length, below is a response from Cesar Chavez that makes a compelling case for why the farmworker movement, like the Civil Rights Movement, desired private foundation assistance for legal representation. One month after Dunbar's letter to Cahn, Chavez addresses Dunbar in a letter, dated January 30, 1967. I found the letter in Leslie Dunbar's files in the Field Foundation Archives (Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin), with a cover letter to Jack Pemberton of the ACLU, advising him to read and advise:

Dear Mr. Dunbar:

It has come to my attention that the Field Foundation would like more comprehensive information regarding our request for assistance in financing a full-time attorney to work with the United Far Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO. I wish this could be done in person, but for the present, expense and time make a trip to New York impossible to arrange.

Let me point out that the problems involved in organizing farm workers are unique. Excluded as we are from the basic

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<sup>36</sup> Chavez File, Field UT Archives.

protective legislation of the National Labor Relations Act, we have had to improvise means of organizing other than those usually used in industrial cases. Our approach has been to offer a broad program of services, which build a base of membership cooperation from which to launch out in the direction of strikes for union recognition.

In every action we take we face tremendous opposition. On a local level this comes from the growers themselves in concert with the power structures they control, i.e., city council, police department, school board, and country officialdom. On higher levels we run into political opposition (such as that of Mr. Reagan in California and Mr. Connolly in Texas) and unified opposition from state organizations of growers and their institutions.

We have built a credit union, insurance program, newspaper (El Malcriado), the beginnings of a cooperative gas station and store and a social service center. We cannot possibly pay for all these services at this time with the dues. Most of the dues collected goes to the insurance plan. When we embark on a plan to attain collective bargaining at a given ranch (such as Shenley and Di Giorgio) we enter into an expensive field of boycott and strike. We must raise all the money necessary for this direct action apart from our dues and apart from the basic contribution for administration made by the AFL-CIO . . .

The AFL-CIO has given us assistance in the area of "labor law." However, such services are useful in a few instances only. Most of our needs are those of workers either "outside of the law" or discriminated against by the law. Consistently our pickets have been arrested as a means of harassment. Our civil rights are disregarded daily. We have been redbaited over and again with no recourse to the law, simply because we are unable to afford defense.

The key point I wish to make is that even though the AFL-CIO and the IUD and the UAW have been of tremendous help we cannot come close to affording the costs of the strike, much less

the luxury of legal defense. It is one of the facts of life for us that organizing committees are not provided with strike funds.

In many ways the need of attorneys similar to those who aided in the civil rights workers in the South. We need attorneys who fight in this jungle, where we are. We need attorneys who can help us organize, using the law as a weapon, rather than standing by as we now do, seeing the law used against us. We operate in an area of grayness, where few laws apply, and where many of those used against us are of questionable constitutionality.

I hope this helps to explain our dire need of a grant for legal assistance. Should it be helpful to arrange a personal presentation of these matters, please let me know, and somehow perhaps it could be done.

Sincerely, Cesar E. Chavez<sup>37</sup>

At the time of his writing, Chavez and the organizers of the UFW were in the middle of heated strikes with the major grape growers in California's Central Valley and were expanding their operation to Texas. Movement volunteers and members were traveling across the state and country spreading the word about 'La Causa' and the California table grape boycott. Chavez himself was gearing up for a national boycott and the strike lines were getting violent. The union was under pressure from angry grower associations, status quo citizen organizations, and local and state representatives, and an increasingly under fire War on Poverty. In this context, and despite the movement's initial resistance to outside public and private funds, Chavez made a compelling case in his letter to Dunbar about how only private funding could support organizing work outside of the current, and potentially unconstitutional, interpretation of the law, and the rights of migrant agricultural workers. However, what Chavez would soon find out is that while private foundations were willing to fund unprecedented change in civil law during the social movements of the 1960's, 'questions of labor relations' remained outside of their grant guidelines.

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<sup>37</sup> UFW/Chavez File, Field UT Archives.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> Dunbar wrote to Cahn that,

“On further reflection I do not think that we should leave the Chavez matter as unclear as I left it last night . . .if nothing concrete develops with the ACLU people next week I am going to have to tell Chavez that we cannot deal directly with him, and that whether we can help him depends in the first instance on whether he can interest a tax-exempt law group in undertaking the project . . . if this do not work out with them (ACLU) I do not think that we should interest another law group; I think that has to be something that Chavez accomplishes himself or through his union colleagues. You have never attached the weight to his affiliation with the AFL-CIO which I think must be recorded. I do not believe it is wise for us to inject ourselves into that situation.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite the care exhibited in his letter to Cahn, on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1967, Dunbar responded to Chavez letter of February 20<sup>th</sup>, (CC to Edgar Cahn and Jack Pemberton of the ACLU) and cited the AFL-CIO affiliation as of primary concern:

Dear Mr. Chavez:

I am sorry that we have not responded more promptly, but we have given considerable thought to your letters of January 19 and February 20. I am afraid the answer is that we shall not be able to assist you at this time in employing legal counsel.

I think the problem is, quite frankly, that we do not wish to make a grant for the direct support of a unit of the AFL-CIO. This would get the foundation closer to questions of labor relations than is justified by our areas of interest. As a Foundation, our concerns are with civil rights, human relations, and child welfare, and this gives us a good bit to do.

If at any time you are able to interest one of the legal groups in providing the kind of legal service which you need, that legal group could apply here. I refer to such organizations as the

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<sup>38</sup> Chavez File, Field UT Archives.



National Office for Relief of the Indigent of the NAAP Legal Defense and Education Fund; or the Roger Baldwin Foundation of the American Civil Liberties Union; or the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law.

With all good wishes. Sincerely yours, Leslie W. Dunbar,  
Executive Director<sup>39</sup>

Dunbar understood that his board would not approve of a grant to a major union and attempted to re-direct Cesar Chavez to the legal institutions that charted the way for and flourished after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 . Unfamiliar with the logic of private foundations, Chavez did not take this news lightly. While Chavez did meet a young UC Berkeley student, Anna Pluraich, who knew how to write private foundation grant proposals in 1965 (Ganz 2008), he had at this point only successfully been awarded funds from the federal government, unions, individual citizens, and through religious organizations associated with Migrant Ministries. Private foundations were an entirely new animal. Only three days later (US Mail must have been very efficient in 1967) Chavez responded to Dunbar.

Dear Mr. Dunbar:

I am quite disappointed to receive your letter of March 14 describing the decision of the Field Foundation not to make a grant to the U.F.W.O.C. The disappointment is all the greater considering the reasoning behind turning down our request.

It would be a simple matter, easily accepted, if we were told, simply, “there is not money available to help the U.F.W.O.C.” But to be told that such a grant cannot be made because of our ties to the AFL-CIO is disheartening. Your letter implies that our organization does not come within the area of your interests, which are civil rights, human relations, and child welfare. Somehow we are not able to draw the same conclusion that you draw, that concern for labor relations puts us in another “area of interest” outside that of civil rights, human relations, and child welfare.

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<sup>39</sup> UFW/Farm Labor File, Field UT Archives.

The fact is that we do not have an attorney. Our affiliation with the AFL-CIO has not assured us of an attorney in the immediate future. I ask that the decision taken be re-examined. It is not just that the farm workers choosing to join our organization should be discriminated against because of our affiliation with the AFL-CIO.

Sincerely yours, Cesar E. Chavez<sup>40</sup>

Almost two months later, Dunbar responded to Chavez' angry reply by reminding him of his suggestion that the Field Foundation might be able to fund legal counsel for the farmworker movement if formally channeled through a legal agency such as the ACLU. Subsequent correspondence between Leslie Dunbar, Edgar Cahn, John Pemberton of the ACLU, and Martin Garbus of the Roger Baldwin Foundation of the ACLU allude to a series of phone calls to persuade Chavez to go the way of a partnership with a legal agency such as the ACLU's Roger Baldwin Foundation. On May 22, 1967 both Cesar Chavez and Martin Garbus wrote a letter to Dunbar informing him of their agreement to submit a grant proposal to Field where the Baldwin Foundation would serve as an umbrella organization (or fiscal sponsor) for the UFWOC. In a letter dated May 4, 1967, Dunbar (with a CC to Edgar Cahn, Donald Sleisman (legal counsel to the AFL-CIO, and Dr. Robert Coles) tells Chavez that he spoke with his board and with Sleisman, and that the foundation is prepared to contribute up to, “ \$25,000 towards the cost of providing legal counsel for the immigrant farm workers with who you are in association,” on the condition that Chavez secure cooperation from an established legal services organization that can submit its own proposal to the foundation.

In June of 1967 Dunbar informed Garbus that the Field Foundation board approved a grant of \$25,000 (the amount requested) to protect the civil liberties of the migrant farm workers (i.e. the legal staff to the UFWOC), expressed his admiration for the United Farm Workers and enclosed a check to the Roger Baldwin Foundation. The grant budget included an attorney salary of \$12,000, a legal secretary at \$550 a month, a community worker at \$250 a month, a small law library, supplies, telephone costs, rent a utilities

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<sup>40</sup>Letter from Cesar Chavez to Leslie Dunbar, March 17, 1967, Cesar Chavez File, Field UT Archives.

and \$200 a month of litigation costs. The legal team, including newly hired Jerry Cohen (previously of CRLA) would,

Enable the Mexican-American migrant workers of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee to exercise fundamental rights (the right to picket, the right to organize and the right to distribute literature favorable to them) and thereby to help them alleviate a desperate economic situation. The legal services provided will lead to new developments in a relatively untouched area of the law – the extension of civil liberties protection for migrant farm workers.<sup>41</sup>

The partnership with the Baldwin Foundation worked out quite well according a series of cordial and satisfactory letters from Chavez, Garbus and Dunbar in 1967 and 1968. However staff at the Field Foundation remained somewhat hesitant to fund a group affiliated with the AFL-CIO. In October 1967 Field Foundation program officer, George Loft (whose pre-foundation history includes consultant positions with industry as opposed to Dunbar's past career as a political science professor) sent Dunbar a memo with an attached New York Times article that describes the union's monthly assets from dues and from the UAW. In the memo Garbus asks of Dunbar,

Les: The attached story on the Chavez operation is interesting. With all the money mentioned –both in dues collected and in AFL-CIO, Reuther, etc. money being pumped into the UFWOC fight, Chavez' inability to finance his own legal counsel is a little puzzling. What happens when our \$25,000 grant for this purpose is used up? Will Chavez be coming back for more help? Do we need to raise this some times with Garbus? GL-10/2/67.<sup>42</sup>

Despite Lofts concerns, the partnership between Baldwin, the UFW, and the Field Foundation thrived and an additional \$85,000 in grants were made to the migrant farmworker legal project through the Baldwin Foundation. After unsuccessful attempts to attract Ford Foundation funds to match the Field Foundation funding the migrant legal services program Garbus and Chavez

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<sup>41</sup>Roger Baldwin Foundation grant proposal to the Field Foundation, Roger Baldwin File, Field UT Archives.

<sup>42</sup>Memo to Leslie Dunbar from George Loft, October, 1967, Farm Labor File, Field UT Archives.

turned to the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF) at the suggestion of Dunbar. After disagreements about MALDEF 'controlling' the legal team from their central offices MALDEF agreed to granting the UFW \$41,000 without strings attached. Ford had reservations about funding the project because of its "political nature" (i.e. its focus on protecting migrants' right to strike and organize) but did continue to fund the UFW's service center work via the Center for Community Change (CCC). In fact in 1968 the Ford Foundation assisted the UFW in applying for 501 © 3 non-profit status in order to receive additional charitable funds for educational and service programs associated with the movement. The National Farmworker Service Center received its non-profit status in 1969 and Ford was then able to make direct grants to the movement without going through the CCC.

In the early spring of 1968 the farmworker movement's fight heated up in the agricultural fields of California. In March Garbus wrote a letter to Dunbar asking for more funds to increase the legal team in the face of serious challenges by the industry and the threats to CRLA who had been covertly providing legal services to the movement. According to Garbus, "the migrant organization is at a critical point and may not last unless additional help is provided" (Letter from Martin Garbus to Leslie Dunbar, March 21, 1968, Field Foundation Archives, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin). The crisis facing the movement included the CRLA Central Valley offices being restricted from working on any cases related to the strikes (under pressure from Reagan and the OEO), grape growers actively recruiting "green carders and wetbacks" to break the strikes, violence against strikers at the hand of local police, mechanization and firing of UFW members, capricious firing of union members, and general discrimination of migrant families by local officials and service providers, and emerging pesticide poisoning cases – all situations that call for legal assistance. Jerry Cohen, working alongside a volunteer legal team, was struggling to keep up as the cases mounted.

Instead of continuing support to the legal program at a critical juncture in the movement a conflict arose that yet again re-ignited the Field Foundation's resistance to fund a union. A four-month correspondence between Leslie Dunbar and Jerry Cohen raised questions for Dunbar that proved to be a fatal blow for the movement's legal services funding from the Field Foundation. Jerry Cohen was known as a fiery and (successfully) antagonistic person who never shied away from speaking his mind. On June 12, 1969 Cohen

wrote a letter to Dunbar asking if they had more funds to donate for an additional legal staff person after Cohen claimed that he, “one again raided California Legal Assistance and have found a good attorney. His name is Chuck Farnsworth and . . . currently he is spending four days a week on our picket lines in the Coachella Valley . . . By August 1, Farnsworth will be working full time for us. In connection with this, it seems that our Baldwin grant has expired . . .” (Letter from Jerry Cohen to Leslie Dunbar, June 12, 1968, Field UT Archives).

There is no response on record from Dunbar until June 27<sup>th</sup> when he reprimanded Cohen for speaking plainly about government assistance to growers in a New York Times Article. In response to Jerry’s comment about the government buying more grapes just as the consumer boycott successfully cut into grape sales, “As we hurt the grower, the grower cries, and they (Pentagon) help him out,” (“Pentagon Faces a Suit on Grapes: Chavez and Union Will Seek Injunction Against Buying Grapes,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1969), Dunbar grew frustrated with Cohen. In his memo, Dunbar addressed ‘Jerry’,

I am sorry to bring this up again but, for God’s sake, let’s cut it out! I have only the greatest admiration for everything reported in this article, except the quotation (above) I have underlined. The stakes are too high, and the issues too important. If we have learned nothing else from the present tempest<sup>43</sup> we have learned trivial happenings -such as this- are the very stuff of legislative umbrage. Let the client make statements like this to the press; not the client’s lawyers.<sup>44</sup>

An apology from Cohen, promising that Dolores Huerta will answer to all media requests in the future, came a week later. However, in his next letter to Dunbar, Cohen asked Dunbar if he may resume speaking to the press, at Chavez’ request, about a \$75 million anti-trust suit growers were attempting to file designed to frighten chain stores out of boycotting grapes. Cohen proposes that his speaking out on this case would not jeopardize the tax-exempt status of the Field Foundation funds because, “the AFL-CIO contributes \$9,000 which is used exclusively for my salary. Therefore I alone would be spokesman to the press on union related suits. Auerbuch,

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<sup>43</sup> ‘The tempest in Congress’ is most likely referring to both the vetoes of the War on Poverty projects and the Tax Reform Act and the significant new restrictions on philanthropic donations.

<sup>44</sup>Letter from Leslie Dunbar to Jerry Cohen, June 7, 1969, Field UT Archives.

Farnsworth and the other attorneys which we hope to hire shortly would restrict their comments to Service Center cases . . .”<sup>45</sup>

After finding out that Cohen’s salary is paid by the AFL-CIO, Dunbar was clearly upset and replied “I was especially interested in reading that your salary is paid by the AFL-CIO. I had not, perhaps because of inattention, known that, and there seems nothing in our file regarding it. Could you give us a summary of the financing of the legal work going on? “ (Letter from Leslie Dunbar to Jerry Cohen, July 22, 1969, Field Foundation Archives, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin). Jerry’s response confirms that the AFL-CIO pays his salary to work on union cases and that the Field Foundation’s current \$35,000 and MALDF’s \$41,000 are spent on legal staff and litigation and office costs. Not satisfied with these answers Dunbar writes to Chavez to remind him that,

To you it may seem an artificial distinction, the Union from the Center. If it is, in fact, an artificial distinction then I believe we may be in trouble. I think you would see why if you asked yourself how many other unions, AFL-CIO or otherwise, get foundation support. Few if any.

I believe your movement (and I believe in it as a strong and good movement) will be much easier for this or any other foundation to assist if the Service Center (NFWSC) salaried staff members are not paid from union funds . . .

You have applied for and received tax-exempt contributions so that the Service Center can receive tax-exempt contributions. Other organizations have also created tax exempt affiliates; the NAACP, for example . . . and ACLU had Roger Baldwin.

Your situation is different. You are operating in the economic field, where there are no constitutional rights except the same First Amendment and procedural ones that all men are supposed to enjoy. I think, therefore, that foundations will likely want to see a recognizable and clear separation between the tax-exempt affiliate and its labor union parent . . .

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<sup>45</sup>Letter from Jerry Cohen to Leslie Dunbar, July 5, 1969, Field UT Archives.

This could be gratuitous advice, because you may decide that you don't want to have foundation aid. I hope you won't decide that, for several reasons. One is that I believe that for your independence of action you will benefit from having a mix of funds. . . the alternative to getting some from foundations is increased reliance on national unions and on fund-raising benefits.

. . . I happen to believe that your movement is a vital and good spirit and foresee for American and for humanity. So I want it to be possible for many, including this foundation, to join in helping.

I would therefore suggest that the Service Center administer your medical, welfare, and educational programs and that lawyers attached to the Service Center be only those whose principle work is in connection with these medical, welfare, and educational programs and with the civil liberties and civil rights of farm workers . . . these practices would I think serve to protect your tax-exemption, and would accord with the Service Center's own articles of incorporation, which say that it will not 'engage in activities - - -not in the furtherance of its specific and primary educational and charitable purposes.'

You will recall that you and I, in early 1967 before Field made its first grant, corresponded about this question . . . Speaking personally, for the moment, to me its great character is its faith in the people and its resolve to see them all live in dignity; and its commitment to non-violence and peace. Those of us who feel this way – and there are many who do – we want to be able to assist without at the same time giving our support to any other economic organization, such as the AFL-CIO or any other national union.”<sup>46</sup>

Despite responses from both Cohen and Chavez, attempting to explain the distinction between Service Center cases -such as worker injuries, the right to have a decent toilet and shade in the fields, and the right not be fired for union activity – from union cases Dunbar refused to continue funding the UFW-NFWSL legal program. Writing to Chavez as follow-up to a face to face meeting in New York, Dunbar concludes, “You understand that we do not believe that we can continue, after this year, to contribute to the legal program if its principal staff or any of them are paid salaries by the AFL-

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<sup>46</sup> Letter from Leslie Dunbar to Cesar Chavez, 1969, Field UT Archives.

CIO . . . we can and would want to talk with you about other things, such as –for example- the Service Center’s health programs or possibly, the general administration costs of the Service Center.” (Letter from Leslie Dunbar to Cesar Chavez, October 20, 1969, Chavez File, Field UT Archives.)

That is the exact direction that the Field Foundation went in, along with many other foundations who made significant grants to the general administration of the growing NFWSC institution but not to union activities, legal services that relate to labor, or to organizing. After the 1969 incorporation as a non-profit 501 © 3 organization, the Norman Foundation made a \$8,000 to the NFWSC and the Rockefeller Brothers made a \$12,000 grant for non-violence training sessions. In 1970 the Ford Foundation granted \$225,000 for further administrative development of the NFWSC and additional service center operations, the Rockefeller Brothers re-granted \$12,000 for the non-violence training, the Abelard Foundation granted \$5,000 for the founding of a Cesar Chavez community school, and the Dubinsky Foundation donated \$12,000 to develop a clinic in Delano.<sup>47</sup> Still an ally in the movement, a Migrant Ministries staff person wrote to Chavez in 1970 about securing grant funds from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and warns (counter to his initial stance against outside funds) that attracting outside, “Money is going to be the key to survival for the farm workers.”<sup>48</sup>

Just as the farmworker movement, like other movement organizations of the time, was beginning to figure out how to attract funds from private foundations, Congress passed Tax Reform Act of 1969. With critiques from the left about foundations acting as unaccountable tax shelters, and from the right about foundations funding radical social movement activity, The Tax Reform Act limited foundation stock holding to 25% in one firm; prohibited foundation grants to relatives and restricted grants to individuals, required that foundations distribute at least 6% of their endowment income annually, and make full reports on foundation spending and activities. The act also forbids funds for influencing legislation or outcomes on elections. In response to critiques from the left foundations were both made more diverse in terms of investments and leadership and more accountable in terms of

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<sup>47</sup> Funding data to the National Farm Worker Service Center and other UFW movement organizations was collected from UFW memos, grant agreements, and correspondence from the Field Archives and the UFW Archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University.

<sup>48</sup>Letter from Chris Hartmeyer to Cesar Chavez, Box 68, Folder 68-12, WSU Archives.



required spend-outs and reporting. In response to the attacks from the right, foundations could no longer support voter activity or legislative advocacy. Beyond voting and legislative activity, the Act “scared the bejeezes out of foundation staff” (Kirke Wilson interview) interested in funding social movement organizations and seriously hampered any gains movement organizations had made with foundations in the 1960’s.

In 1970 Anna Puharich, Chavez’ assistant, claimed that the Ford Foundation suspended its \$225,000 grant as a result of the Tax Reform Act. This may be the case, even though in correspondence from Ford Foundation, Center for Community Change, and Puharich correspondence, I found that the foundation argued that the grant would not be continued due to an incomplete audit, no active accounting system, and no director of the Service Center programs they intended to fund. In the wake of the Tax Reform Act and the Ford Foundation grant decision, Puharich initiated a foundation fundraising campaign and sent out letters of interest to multiple foundations with an appeal for assistance,

“In 1969, we received a grant through an ‘operating foundation’, the Center for Community Change, to set up additional NFW Service Centers . . . Shortly after we opened the new field centers, Congress passed the 1969 tax reform bill. Because of this legislation the Center was forced to suspend its support. As a result, we have faced constant daily struggle to keep our centers open . . .to alleviate this situation, we need direct foundation support . . we believe with proper support we can significantly increase our services to the farm worker movement in 1970.”<sup>49</sup>

This plea was relatively successful as by 1971 a NFWSC fund raising office was opened in New York City in Central Park West, and grants to the NFWSC came in from the Field Foundation, the DJB Foundation, the Playboy Foundation, the Kaplan Fund, the New York Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers, and the Anne Weinberg Memorial Foundation totaling over \$50,000 but not coming close to the support from the Ford Foundation CCC grant. In 1972 the NFWSC received larger grants, including \$30,000 from the Stern Fund to develop auto-mechanic cooperatives for

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<sup>49</sup> Grant proposal from the National Farm Worker Service Center, Box 29, NFWSC Folder, WSU Archives.

farmworkers, and \$20,000 from the Akbar Foundation to launch an East Coast legal program. Between 1970-1972 the NFWSC also received over \$50,000 from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development in partnership with Migrant Ministries to train and staff organizers through a worker-priest program in existence since 1964, initially launched with Rosenberg Foundation funding.

Despite their success at attracting foundation grant, the movement was in crisis throughout the 1970's. Foundation grants for the NFWSC, and the seven additional non-profit organizations eventually founded by UFW leadership, did not go towards facing the increasing challenges of the movement, required increased administration and eventually distracted movement leadership from union organizing when the movement faced its most severe challenges.

### **The Downturn: Teamsters, Purges, and Retreat to the NFWSC**

Despite the important and enduring victories of the Farm Worker Movement<sup>50</sup>, the movement to change the nature of the farm labor system and to create a viable union for migrant farmworkers retreated to the NFWSC and movement organizations<sup>51</sup> in the face of both internal and external challenges. The first major challenge was the simultaneous change in the farm industry and increasing competition with the Teamsters. In 1970 major conglomerates of growers closed their non-farm product businesses making the UFW's previously successful consumer boycott tool ineffective. The strategy of disguising production processes and distribution in large international conglomerations was a particularly successful tactic in avoiding protest and boycott of consumer goods. In the summer of 1970 two weeks after the Teamsters made a sweet heart deal with major growers in the

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<sup>50</sup> As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this study is not a comprehensive account of the farmworker movement, the challenge they faced, and the historic victories won on behalf of farmworkers. However it is important to acknowledge the gains of the movement, including legislating that farmers provide toilets in fields, cold drinking water, rest periods, and unemployment insurance. Movement lobbying banned the use of the short handle hoe that required workers to kneel for hours on end, created the Agricultural Labor Relations Action (ALRA), and raised awareness among advocates and citizens. The movement also trained many leaders who became high-level union and community organizers still fighting for this country's poorest workers today.

<sup>51</sup> By the late 1970's the UFW founded 8 affiliated 'movement organizations' including the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation, the Cesar E. Chavez Community Development Fund, the Juan De La Cruz Pension Fund, the Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan, and the Farm Worker Institute for Education and Leadership Development, which are beyond the scope of this study.

Salinas valley, workers initiated a general strike. This strike was organized by emerging farmworker leaders who were not official union organizers and were not approved by Chavez. Chavez, angered by the leaders' refusal to end the strike, denounced the main organizers. This was the first major rift among movement leadership that led to a 'purge' of the entire volunteer legal and organizing staff and consolidation of leadership among Chavez's close associates and family by 1977.

According to my interviews and archival documentation, the 'purge' of board members, and volunteer organizers and legal staff was conducted by Chavez and Chris Hartmeyer of Migrant Ministries through a process called 'The Game'. Originally used by a drug and alcohol treatment program called Synanon in the Tehachapi Mountains near La Paz, participants in 'The Game' were asked to share their inner fears, angers, and frustrations. Participants who were comfortable or honest enough to express dissatisfaction with Chavez' leadership were told to leave the movement. Those loyal to the union claim that the legal team left at their own will due to their growing demands to be paid as more than volunteers. Many argue that it was the purge and Chavez' increasing paranoia that turned him away from union organizing and towards developing a professional management structure through the non-profit organizations that could be more closely controlled by an inner circle of family members. One interviewee described the effect of the purge, the loss of Phillip Vera Cruz, Gilbert Padilla, Marshall Ganz, and the entire legal department as the death of the movement spirit: "the air went out of it". (Pawel 2007).

Leading up to the purges, in the context of the changes in the industry, increasing competition with the Teamsters, and rifts among core movement leadership, a centralized team including Chavez and his family moved away from Delano to re-group and focus on the NFWSC and other wings of the movement. In a letter to Leslie Dunbar about funding the administration of the newly incorporated NFWSC, Anne Puharich explained in a 1971 to Leslie Dunbar of the Field Foundation,

Several key decisions have just been made which when implemented will substantially alter the structure of the NFWSC. For example, a final decision has been made to create a new national headquarters for the union away from Delano . . . Delano, now the center of everything, will become a region with its own leadership, staff and program servicing a more

established constituency, but the process of disengagement of the nation functions will be painful and not without problems . .

<sup>52</sup>

A 200-acre facility 30 miles southeast of Bakersfield was rented at almost no cost from a wealthy friend of the movement who purchased it from the state. The site named “Our Lady of Peace” (La Paz) was a former tuberculosis facility, closed down by Kern County and to be developed by the NFWSC as an educational and training facility for farm workers and their families. However, at a NFWSC meeting in 1971 with Cesar Chavez, Larry Itliong, Dolores Huerta, LeRoy Chatfield, Rev. James Drake, Phillip Vera Cruz, and Rev. Wayne Hartmeyer, Chavez suggests that all of the Field Foundation funds and the remaining Ford Foundation funds be spend on building maintenance. In the meeting minutes recorded during this time there is no record of a programs for or engagement of farmworkers.<sup>53</sup>

Overwhelmed by internal crisis and external threat, the leadership could not keep up with the administrative duties that foundation grants required. Between 1970 and 1976 multiple angry letters from foundations were received claiming that there was no documentation of how funds were being spent, no financial accounting, and unapproved re-appropriation of funds to undisclosed projects.<sup>54</sup> In one case a NFWSC staff person noted that, “The \$30,000 (from the Stern Foundation) remains intact for several reasons. Decision was made that La Causa’s life was seriously threatened and that many of the projects would have to be postponed (Hand-written memo titled ‘Foundations –Stern Fund’, Foundations Folder, WSU Archives). Other responses to foundations asked that original plans for worker coops, credit unions or legal work in other states, be re-directed back to general administration at the NFWSC. A 1973 NFWSC memo titled, “Problems with Foundations” lists staff reports due, funds not spent, and outstanding decisions to be made about previous requests to re-direct funds. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development even asked, after a long correspondence on past due reports, that its grant be returned.

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<sup>52</sup> Box 51, Field Foundation Folder, WSU Archives

<sup>53</sup> Meeting minutes from NFWSC files in the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University and NFWSC files at the Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin

<sup>54</sup> Letters in foundation files from the Field Foundation archives at the Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin and from foundation files in the United Farm Worker Archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University.

In 1975 Chavez' assistant Ann Plurarich described how the movement was in such turmoil that her stress level created health problems that prevent her from being able to send due reports to the Field Foundation, or to get additional grant proposals out. Chavez health was also ailing, including his lingering back problems resulting from multiple fasts and stress. By 1976 the NFWSC convened a restructuring conference to figure out what the role of the NFWSC should be. At this meeting Chavez proposed that the NFWSC is the 'hustling arm of the union' and its job is to attract resources to the various arms of the movement. From the meeting minutes, it appears as if the actual activities of the NFWSC from 1970-1976 mainly included building maintenance at La Paz, a cooperative garden and store, and general planning and administration. I could not find reporting on any program to engage or serve farmworkers other than a new project to develop a radio network. Through the NFWSC significant funds were raised for the founding of the Radio Campesino network, including one grant from the Department of Labor that according to anonymous movement leaders that I interviewed, ended in an audit on fraud and corruption.

As administrative teams were employed at La Paz with foundation grants, crisis in the fields was rising. The UFW's historic grape contracts expired, violence increased on the picket lines and striking workers were attacked by hired Teamsters vigilantes and local sheriffs. In 1974 growers came to Governor Ronald Reagan to put an end to the picket lines. Reagan did not accomplish a compromise between the growers and the Union but in 1974 then Governor Jerry Brown, came up with a proposal for and passed an act to form the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB). The ALRB became the new battleground for the UFW. Brown instituted an ALRB with pro-labor UFW people and passed new regulations including: 1. The Access Rule: the union has the right to go on farm property and talk to workers, 2. Make Whole Law: if workers are let go early in the season the grower must pay for the whole season. 3. Certification: legal union representation and requirements of good faith bargaining. Cesar spent the next year educating workers on these new regulations and managing the growing union non-profits.

With a re-constituted leadership team and an increasing focus on legislative leadership campaigns, another blow to the movement came when Governor Deukmejian was elected Governor in 1982 and transformed the UFW won ALRB into an advocacy arm of grower associations. With the new ALRB, the union was faced with additional contract losses, and failed lettuce strikes,

boycotts and fasts. With time growers developed new tactics and began to take the UFW to court for civil damages, perhaps not coincidentally just after the purge of almost all of the UFW lawyers. For many this marked the end of collective action for the UFW. The increase in undocumented immigration also created additional organizing challenges for a union with a history of opposing ‘illegal alien’ scabs recruited by growers in collaboration with the INS.<sup>55</sup>

In the face of internal crisis and external threats from industry and the political establishment the farmworker movement retreated from organizing and focused on managing the union non-profit organizations. By the early 2000’s the UFW membership shrank to under 5,000 members yet movement organizations were collectively receiving over 1 million dollars a year from funders including the California Endowment, the Packard Foundation, The Kellogg Foundation, and The Annie E. Casey Foundation for service and educational programs. While the relationship between the rise in non-profit resources and foundation grants and the decrease in organizing and membership is not necessarily a causal relationship, it is clear that the focus of the movement moved away from addressing the unfair and substandard labor system that creates enduring migrant poverty, and towards the kinds of services and programs that private philanthropy will fund.<sup>56</sup>

Some of the movement’s current philanthropic partners are attracted to the union particularly because of its radical history and beginnings, and seek to share in and revive its legacy. But like the Ford and Field Foundations in the 1960’s because they do not make grants to address issues of structural economic inequity, they are neither funding a union or a social movement. Without understanding the history of the movement’s non-profit organizations, they attempt to create partnerships with the UFW to revive its grassroots CSO mutual benefit community service beginnings but instead plug money into well-established institutions. Many Chavez family members and historic allies that I interviewed would disagree with arguments that the movement failed due to the union’s low membership levels, waning social

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<sup>55</sup> The increase in undocumented immigration to California in the 1970’s and after the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act are both important trends to understand in the context of both the UFW’s challenges of philanthropy to farmworker communities and will be addressed in the following chapter.

<sup>56</sup> The UFW also eventually moved towards immigration reform through the AgJobs legislation as will be discussion in future chapters.

movement, or failure to change a labor system that relies on poor migrant workers. Chavez' sons Anthony and Paul, directors of movement organizations, including the multi-million dollar Radio Campesino and the Cesar Chavez Development Fund respectively believe that they are doing what their father only dreamed of – building long lasting institutions that build income, pride, and businesses opportunities the children of farm workers.

Dolores Huerta claims that the solution is to get back to the idea of mobilizing a permanent and strong volunteer base of farmworkers with roots in their own communities and moving away from employing staff paid by foundation grants. In speaking of the kinds of organizers she believes could re-create a farmworker movement Huerta claims, “I don't even want them to speak English. Now I want good farmworkers who will commit for the long term. But even then there are other well established farmworker organizations that will come along and take our organizers from here and there.” (Interview with Dolores Huerta, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

It is in just this recognition of the *wholeness* of the process that the concept of ‘hegemony’ goes beyond ideology. What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values . . . it is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific changing pressures and limits . . . in practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. –Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 1977.

By looking at power, at movements to change or maintain the status quo, as closely related to the way people and institutions organize themselves as opposed to the simple manipulation of a ruling class presents hegemony as always changing, always being “renewed, recreated, defended, and modified”. (Williams, p112) By looking at the diverse and often contradictory ideas and institutional strategies engaged by counter-hegemonic movements such as the Farm Worker Movement we also see how resistance is never completely singular or unitary but rather comprised of a diverse network of experiences, relationships, and events that are

constantly reshaped by the pressures and limits presented by immediate and changing contexts. Just as resistance is never complete, neither is absolute rule or the status quo.

With the ending of the Bracero Guest worker program in 1964 a door was opened for a revolutionary attempt to galvanize, organize, and unionize farmworkers -to transform an agricultural system that thrived on the 'great exception' to the industrial regulations and protections gained in the labor movement of the 1930's. Without labor protections, the lowest wages in the country, migratory life histories, and poor living conditions the farmworkers' struggle made a significant break in a seemingly monolithic industrial system of rule. Through self-help leadership and community development, through social services, strikes, boycotts, through theater, print and radio communications, and unionization a group of individuals and institutions presented an alternative politics and culture to a previously 'un-organizable' population and workforce. In the context of a raging Civil Rights Movement the farmworkers' social justice and ethnic pride approach took flight and gained wider support across the nation and world. The movements' attack on the poor treatment, lack of voice, and poor living conditions for migrant workers revealed the cracks and openings in a hegemonic system.

As the Farm Worker Movement made a significant break in the history of the agricultural system it also had its own internal limits. The tension between a community union focused on ideas of self-help, volunteerism, social services and local worker ownership and the founding of an AFL-CIO affiliated union with a formal bureaucratic leadership structure proved too severe for movement funders and leaders to manage. In the face of internal leadership crisis and growing external challenges the union's core leadership retreated from both worker organizing and the community union vision to nonprofit management. The American War on Poverty brought new resources and institutions to Central Valley farmworker communities yet in the process introduced competition, turf battles, and the politics of philanthropy to the emerging movement. The movement's relationships with the Ford Foundation and Field Foundation in particular facilitated a separation of the economic and social goals of the movement, union organizing from community service, and movement leaders from organizing in the agricultural fields. The philanthropic model of separating out work in 'the the economic sphere' as untouchable helped incorporate the movement into a model more in keeping with the agricultural system of patronage, and



further limited what movement organizations were able to achieve. Ultimately through relationships with funders and processes of institutionalization of both the union and its' nonprofit movement organizations, Chavez' unified theory of social change fractured, separating the social welfare and leadership of workers from the economic structures that maintain farmworker poverty and powerlessness –the social movement from the union.

In keeping with a Gramscian understanding of the political negotiations of social change, I argue that civil society is not completely out of reach of and is in many instances an (often contested) arm of capitalist hegemony. The crisis of a hegemonic order provides openings, but cannot predict the outcome of any intervention. In the end, Chavez' vision of bringing pride, justice, and viable futures to a people living and working in desperate conditions (the vision of by all accounts a brilliant mind and talented organizer) also held the seeds of its own undoing. Because Chavez always believed that, “The fight is never about grapes and lettuce. It is about people,”<sup>57</sup> attempts to unionize an industry gave way to building long-term farm worker serving organizations that fell prey to the politics of institution building, bureaucracy, competition, and retreat in the context of internal and external crisis. The inner circle of leaders did build strong and durable institutions, but lost sight of ‘the grapes and the lettuce’ and the people that continue to pick them. By the mid 1970’s the particular ideas and strategies of the movement no longer connected with the constellation of social forces that originally gave the movement legitimacy and power. The window that opened in 1964 –the concrete conjuncture of Chavez' unified vision of a community union, the ending of the Bracero program, the rising civil rights activism, the settling of once migrant families, the support from political, media, and philanthropic institutions –just as quickly closed with the practical defeats in the fields, internal leadership crisis, increasing undocumented immigration, the conservative political turn marked by the election of Governor Deukmejian in 1983, and the restructuring of the agricultural economy.

Through an archival investigation of social movement organizations and leaders, this chapter reveals the internal struggles, the contradictions, and incompleteness of both dominant structures in society and of movements for social and economic justice. Understanding the contradictions embodied by

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<sup>57</sup> [http://thinkexist.com/quotes/like/the\\_fight\\_is\\_never\\_about\\_grapes\\_or\\_lettuce-it\\_is/338990/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/like/the_fight_is_never_about_grapes_or_lettuce-it_is/338990/)

social movement leaders and funders is critically important when investigating how social institutions are built and transformed over time, and how we have arrived at the present day where organizing farmworkers is again viewed as an unimaginable task by even the most seasoned advocates. Instead of a straightforward picture of co-option and control, a nexus of ideas and relationships between leaders and institutions emerges across shifting political and economic terrains. How the ideas and strategies of counter-movement institutions are incorporated into the dominant system is revealed in the following chapters. Unlike the clear and articulated social movement ethics, goals, and strategies of the early Farm Worker Movement, farmworker programming around issues of immigration and 'immigrant integration,' since the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, provide an even clearer example of contradictory negotiations between worker advocates and growers.

## Chapter Three

### **The Program Officer: Negotiating the Politics of Philanthropy From Farmworker Organizing to Immigrant Integration**

#### **Introduction**

Nowhere else in the world have so many foundations been so heavily staffed with *philanthrocrats* – the approximately ten thousand foundation professionals who, though not wealthy on their own account, often refer to themselves as philanthropists. (Mark Dowie, *American Foundations*, 2001)

‘Philanthropoids’ steadily acquire from their work an illusion of omniscience and omnipotence. (Frederick Keppel, *The Foundation: its place in American life*, 1930)

No one ever got fired from a foundation for doing a bad job – only for sticking to a principle. (Ben Whitaker, *The Philanthropoids, Foundations and Society*, 1974)

The simultaneous destruction of the ideology and institutional structures that support the Welfare State, and the exponential growth in the philanthropic sector during the 1980’s marked a significant shift away from the social movement era of the 1960’s and early 1970’s<sup>58</sup>. Under attack by politicians

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<sup>58</sup> Philanthropic contributions to non-profit organizations in the United States more than doubled every decade since the 1970’s. Today private foundations give roughly \$300 billion each year. If the non-profit sector were considered an economy, it would be the world’s largest, employing 10% of the US workforce (Klein 2006). There are several causes of this rapid growth. For one, the 1969 Tax Reform Act (TRA) required that foundations spend at least 6% of the income made from foundation endowments and report all grants made, a practice many foundations historically avoided. The TRA also required that foundation investments and boards of directors diversify beyond the family of the wealthy founder.

and pundits inspired by President Ronald Reagan's less taxes/less government neo-conservative 'revolution', poverty programs, legal aid agencies, unions, and social movements organizations experienced a significant retrenchment. With cuts to federal poverty programming and institutions that serve the poor, yet an increase in private philanthropic wealth, many organizations born out of movement times found themselves reshaping program priorities and constituencies to fit the emerging priorities of private foundations. Faced with the daunting challenge of responding to the needs of the enormous amount of social movement organizations and poverty programs born in the 1960's private foundations found themselves for the first time instituting formal funding guidelines, program areas, and professionalized staff. With the enlarged amount of nonprofit organizations to fund, foundations also found themselves less concerned with founding new institutions (as was the common model in the 1960s's) and more interested in shaping their own foundation driven program areas and projects. This new work required a different kind of staff – principally what is now commonly referred to as the 'program officer'.

In the case of farmworker organizing, foundations in the 1960's were primarily interested in supporting new institutions inspired by the War on Poverty and the social movements of the day. With the major changes in both the national political climate and the agricultural industry<sup>59</sup>, philanthropic investments in farmworker communities were organized around an entirely different rationale throughout the 1980's and 1990's. The foundation program officer played a significant role in shaping these new funding priorities across the Central Valley. With the cresting of the farmworker movement after 1970, an increase in undocumented immigration to California, and the eventual passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986 specific foundation program officers became interested in questions of citizenship and 'immigrant integration.' This chapter explains the increasingly important role of professional foundation staff, i.e. the program officer, in negotiating the emerging funding frameworks and collaborative grant making models – in this case the specific rise in

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<sup>59</sup> While briefly touched upon in this chapter, the changes to the agricultural economy are not addressed here. These shifts are discussed in greater depth in Chapters Four and Five as they directly relate to the content of these chapters. This chapter is primarily concerned with the emerging professional structures and roles in the philanthropic sector and serves as a bridge from the social movement chapters (1-2) and the collaborative initiatives explored in the final chapters (3-4).

immigrant integration and civic participation frameworks. The final chapters, Four and Five, are case studies of two such program officer created and managed initiatives. In this chapter I argue that understanding the practices of foundation program officers and the institutional contexts in which they work, increases our understanding of the dominant collaborative funding strategies and the consequences for farmworker institutions and advocates in non-movement times.

In this chapter I explore the daily work of the foundation program officer by investigating the political negotiations between foundation staff, farmworker and immigrant organizations and the oftentimes more conservative foundation leadership. With a focus on how program officers negotiate funding immigrant and farmworker organizations in a conservative, neo-liberal, institutional and political climate, I argue that self described 'progressive' program officers attempt to overcome the conservative ideology of their board members yet operate within an increasingly professional, hierarchical culture that sets a limited terrain of negotiation. The articulation of funding frameworks that simultaneously speak to the interests of foundation boards, staff, and grantees often dilutes and redirects efforts that aim to address social and economic inequity still endured by farmworker communities. I illustrate the processes in which these articulations are shaped: how program officers are revered and 'pitched to' by grassroots immigrant organizers at one end and made to pitch their own proposals to conservative boards on the other. They construct programs based on partial truths, or myths, of individualistic self-help while cognizant that global industrial agriculture remains at the root of many of the problems they seek to address. Capacity building efforts professionalize grassroots organizations making them more likely to receive funds yet less likely to organize their original constituents. Collaborative funding structures pull unlikely partners together creating new alliances, which are sometimes effective coalitions and other times illogical 'beasts' that drain time and resources from on the ground organizing.

Center to the negotiations of the foundation Program Officer are the inherent political limits of mainstream philanthropy. From the founding of the early American foundations such as the Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford Foundations to the multiple general purpose foundations making grants to nonprofit organizations today, philanthropic giving has clearly defined limits. Created and maintained through wealth generated from the surplus of capitalist production, foundations interested in poverty alleviation will not

fund labor organizing or labor rights. Foundations interested in environmental degradation generally don't fund global corporate accountability. Foundations interested in immigrants prefer to fund citizenship education, but not immigrant rights. In other words, foundation priorities reveal the grand paradox of funding working class organizing through the surplus of capital. The surplus of capital is generally understood as the profit generated from unpaid or underpaid labor. In the globalized world of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century, unpaid or underpaid labor is one of the main causes of deepening embedded poverty. Can the surplus of capitalist exploitation be used to aid those upon whose backs this surplus is generated? Can these surplus dollars contribute to lasting change if systemic questions of labor, migration, and human rights organizing are not addressed? The program officers featured in this chapter struggle with this question as they negotiate between the philanthropic institutions in which they work and grassroots advocacy organizations they support.

While this chapter is primarily concerned with constraints and challenges of a fully developed nonprofit-philanthropic sector, I do not view the sector as a closed system or monolithic power but rather as a field of diverse possibilities and alternatives where people and groups compete to establish their interpretation of positive social change. I reveal how seemingly monolithic institutions are full of tentative alliances, always changing with the political and economic shifts of the time. I first review the limited critical literature that exists on philanthropy and society in order to contextualize the practices of the program officer within broader conversations in the field. Next a section on the transformation in foundation interests from farmworker organizing to immigrant integration sets the stage for an analysis of how program officers negotiate funding frameworks and relationships in the field. Data collected for this chapter include semi-structured interviews with 10 foundation program officers, 5 philanthropic consultants, and 10 grantees working with Central Valley farmworker and immigrant communities and textual analysis of archival foundation program materials and literature. Most of the program officers and all of the organizers and consultants interviewed for this chapter fund or work with Central Valley immigrant and farmworker communities.

## **Generating Consent in Civil Society: A Gramscian Analysis of Philanthropy**

Over the past century significant critiques have been made of private foundations as unaccountable institutions that use private wealth, often resulting from labor, environmental, and human rights abuses, to fund palliative programs that ultimately pave the way for continued capitalist development and structural inequity (Keppel 1930, Stormer 1936, Whitaker 1974, Arnove 1980, Roelofs 2003, INCITE! 2007). In 1974, Ben Whitaker argued that the only way that private foundations might move beyond their capitalist interests and make significant social change in the world is if the predominantly conservative foundation boards would listen to their more progressive program staff (Whitaker 1974).

At the time of Whitaker's writing private grant making foundations employed very small staffs, two or three for a well-endowed family foundation. Since then thousands of foundations have grown to employ large staffs and American philanthropy has matured into a full-fledged profession -with program officers designing, granting, and managing multiple program areas and regional initiatives domestically and abroad. Have these 'progressive' staffs challenged the still predominantly business oriented boards of directors, as Whitaker hoped? While several scholars have commented on the importance of foundation staff (program officers) in managing philanthropic contributions (Katz 1987, Roelofs 2003, Fleishman 2006, Dowie 2001), none have studied the specific ways in which program officers attempt to influence the practice of grant making.

While no academic study has focused specifically on the role of the foundation program officer, a few educational and political theorists have argued that philanthropic programming is nothing short of liberal foundations playing out their hegemonic function in maintaining the American capitalist status quo. These primarily post-Marxist theorists claim that foundation programming maintains the status quo by crafting a neutral and benevolent image while appearing detached from their corporate capitalist origins (Arnove 1980, Roelofs 2003). Conservative scholars in some ways agree with this Marxist-Gramscian analysis, claiming that conservative foundations are effective because they are outwardly "devoted to strengthening democratic capitalism and the institutions, principles, and values that sustain it, with clarity of vision and political strategy," (Schambra, 2004) while liberal foundations take a slow social science

‘tinkering’ approach, catering to multiple interests and intellectual ideas, ultimately accomplishing nothing (Schambra 2004, Allen Smith 1991). Others, from both post-Marxist and free-market perspectives defend philanthropy as ‘balancing’ institutions that will either save humanity or save capitalism from its ultimate destruction. Evoking Carl Polanyi (1944), Van Til (2000) argues that philanthropy serves as a counterweight to the destructive forces of capital by funding and guiding social programs in the third sector.

The broader question of whether the power of private philanthropy has helped or corrupted poor people’s social movements has been debated by scholars of social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977, Haines 1984, Jenkins 1986, INCITE! 2007) and by journalists concerned with the controlling nature of elite patronage (Coon 1938, Stormer 1964). In response to social control theory (Piven and Cloward 1977), which argues that professionalization and patronage control social movements, Jenkins and Eckert’s (1986) study of the black power movement argues that private funding only weakens but does not transform movement goals or tactics. Since the early 1990’s, in the context of increasing privatization and shrinking public welfare systems, political scientists have argued that the multitude of organizations supported by private philanthropy function as a “shadow state” (Wolch 1990) or powerful “state apparatus” (Roelofs 2003) that co-opt or manage movements through ideological frames that promote individual improvement and participation over structural analysis of inequity (Joseph 2001, Cruickshank 1999, Hyatt 2001, O’Connor 2001). More recent scholars of what they term the Non Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) go as far as arguing that in the wake of the social movements of the 1960’s a white liberal hegemony took over civil society to quell the more radical organizing of the black power, third world, and poor people’s movements (Rodriguez 2003).

While each perspective brings valuable insights to the role of philanthropy in society, the post-Marxist Gramscian theory is most useful for understanding the role of the program officer. This is primarily because a Gramscian approach pays specific attention to intellectual ‘managers’ and the ideas they promote in civil society. Inspired by the groundbreaking collection of essays, *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism* (Arnové 1980), Joan Roelofs’ *Foundations and Public Policy: the Mask of Pluralism* (2003) outlines a general Gramscian framework for understanding the mainstream ‘Liberal’ foundation as a key power broker in preventing radical or structural



change by manufacturing consent in civil society. Gramsci's theory of hegemony posits that any dominant political system is maintained both through the state and a supportive complex web of organizations and institutions in civil society (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999, Gramsci in Forgacs, 2000). These organizations and the various 'public intellectuals' that work within and across them produce consent through the production and communication of ideas that appear to make common sense. Ideas once conceived of as dissenting, such as 'empowerment' or 'community action' are neutralized and incorporated into new non-threatening ideologies and programs that take the place of more radical or confrontational approaches to social change.

In Roelofs' analysis of philanthropy in the United States, 'liberal' private grant making foundations, such as Rockefeller, Ford, or Carnegie, are distinguished as more effective at generating consent because they are more convincingly 'neutral' or palatable than conservative or radical grant making foundations, and because they are more likely to engage with and neutralize the work of radical social change groups from the 'left.' Employing ideologically progressive staffs that advocate for more radical program funding, liberal or mainstream foundations contain the work of a wide array of 'non-conforming' groups, but are in reality unable to stray too far from their ideologically conservative free market oriented boards. From this perspective the multiple and oftentimes contradictory positions within liberal foundations help to generate a web of ideologies and programmatic funding priorities that ultimately generate consent.

These critiques provide a useful framework for understanding the ways in which private philanthropy waters down and redirects more radical community organizing and is complicit in reproducing subjectivities and conditions that support the free market economy. However, much of the discourse remains on the 'hegemonic' or ideological level, with no analysis of the actual processes and relationships involved in private grant making. Most critics fail to explain the specific contradictions, debates, practices and strategies taking shape within philanthropy and the non-profit sector. Arnove and Roelofs in particular present foundations as all-powerful institutions that unflinchingly convince professionals and publics to follow their seemingly benign plans of capitalist reproduction. By theorizing cultural domination without investigating the specific practices, battles over frames and ideas, and the potential political opportunities, as a more fluid reading of Gramsci

might suggest (LaClau and Mouffe 2001), their work only answers a limited range of questions.

By excavating the internal workings of private philanthropy through the work of the program officer I propose to reveal how seemingly monolithic institutions are in practice full of ideological contradictions and tentative alliances, always changing with the political, economic, and ideological shifts of the time. Hall's notion of 'articulation' (Hall 1985, Li 2000) helps us to examine how ideological and strategic articulations and alliances are never quite fixed and are always open to constant re-appropriation, and how power and actions to confront that power can constitute one another. Building on Gramsci's work, Hall argues that certain positions, identities or interests are never fixed or complete but rather grow contingently in the course of struggle. In this sense, programs framed by foundations may control grantees at one moment, yet they may also contain elements of alternatives to the dominant framework they represent, and they may be understood and used differently across the organizations and networks at different moments in time.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's when it was no longer acceptable to frame projects in terms of social welfare, and when anti-immigrant sentiments ran high, program officers found themselves searching for new ways to fund farmworker or migrant organizing in ways that make it past their boards to funding. Organizers and non-profit staff have also become keenly aware of the challenges associated with finding foundations that will support work that confronts the root problems fueling the growing economic and political inequities of our time. In the interest of attaining resources for poor communities and opening up spaces for new political alliances and opportunities, many foundation and non-profit professionals learn to negotiate the current political paradigm as they work with foundations. Engaging in this political game presents both opportunities and risks. Funding often increases opportunities to gather resources and skills necessary to build strategic alliances and affect political change. Yet non-profit leaders are also aware of the risks associated with professionalization and institutionalization of organizing strategies. Many foundation and non-profit staff recognize that short term funding cycles, competition for limited funds, and granting requirements that limit what people can or cannot say and do often short change the potential for building long term organizing agendas. Illuminating how foundation program officers negotiate these risks,

opportunities, and tensions in the context of farmworker and immigrant communities in California's Central Valley is the central task of this chapter.

### **The New Invisible Worker: Program Officers Turn Towards Immigrant Integration**

The problem with the 1960's was how to cope with such a fertile period. Until then every applicant received a prompt, personal reply, and if the request came within the Foundation's guidelines, a decision could be made within a month or so. We were finally reduced in about 1966 to form letters . . . that flow tells you something about emerging problems, if you watch it carefully. We've always had plenty of applications, but not like the push of the 1960's . . . and that is the principal reason the board undertook such an intensive review of its policies and guidelines during 1972 . . . <sup>60</sup>

The rapid expansion and professionalization of the foundation sector was especially pronounced in California, with most of the foundations in the first half of the twentieth century, such as Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie, operating and making grants on the East Coast. Even though California saw a rapid increase in philanthropic activity, most grants were made to urban organizations in Southern California or the Bay Area. However The Rosenberg Foundation, whose grants to Central Valley migrant projects were featured in Chapter One, did continue to make grants in the Central Valley and paved the way for a series of large-scale program officer initiated farmworker and immigration initiatives from the late 1980's to the present. It was the turn towards citizenship and immigrant integration and away from farmworker organizing that marked these investments.

In this section, I show how while increased undocumented immigration presented challenges for the farmworker movement it opened a new door for philanthropic investments in migrant communities. The turn towards immigration and citizenship pioneered by the Rosenberg Foundation's Kirke

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<sup>60</sup> Ruth Chance, Bay Area Foundation History, Volume II, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Wilson in the 1980's inspired a network of funders interested in issues of immigration, including Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), the Four Freedoms Fund, and two large-scale foundation driven collaboratives of farmworker and immigrant organizations in the Central Valley. The ways in which immigrant integration is theorized and framed by donors, is explored in the following sections on how program officers negotiate the politics of philanthropy.

### **The 'Illegal Alien' Campaign and the Rights of Immigrants**

Following the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, the flow of undocumented Mexican nationals in search of work California's Central Valley rapidly increased. The Immigration Reform Act of 1965 allowed legal residents to bring family members to the United States so after three decades of contracted Mexican Bracero labor in the Central Valley, many farmworkers began to establish permanent, if not legal, residence and brought family and friends across the border throughout the late 1960's and 1970's. Despite the farmworker movement's social justice and migrant rights' stance, the UFW presented a supportive position on the 1972 Arnett Law, known as the 'illegal alien law', that proposed a fine for employers who hire undocumented workers and launched an 'illegal alien' campaign of their own. In his statement in support of the Arnett Law, Cesar Chavez argued that growers and the Republican Party were allowing 'illegals' to cross the border and break strikes, unchecked in a silent agreement with agribusiness.<sup>61</sup>

While Chavez and the UFW's aim in supporting the Arnett Law was to prevent strike breaking, save jobs for legal residents and to prevent the depression of farm wages, many Latino groups spoke out against it and against the UFW's campaign.<sup>62</sup> However, the UFW continued to lobby against undocumented immigration through its 'Illegal Alien Campaign'. In an effort to prevent growers from breaking UFW strikes with 'illegal alien' scabs, UFW staff lobbied the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to increase inspections and deport any undocumented immigration working on a striking farm. Suspicious that growers were collaborating with the Teamsters and the United States government to break strikes by recruiting undocumented workers, UFW staff and volunteers carefully documented the

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<sup>61</sup> Memo to Governor Ronald Reagan from Dixon Arnett regarding A.B. 528 -Illegal Aliens, Immigration Folder, WSU Archives.

whereabouts of thousands of undocumented workers across the Central Valley and reported them to the INS and the Border Patrol.<sup>63</sup> As Chavez launched the ‘Illegal Alien Campaign’, Latino groups involved in building a coalition to defeat then President Nixon’s anti-immigrant and anti-labor practices, (including a series of federal immigration raids and the Nixon-Rodino Bill which made it illegal for any employer to hire an undocumented immigrant) became particularly upset with Chavez’ position. In 1973 and 1974 Chavez received numerous letters criticizing the union’s stance on undocumented immigration:

From the UFW’s Boycott staff in Arizona

Dear Chavez, you have requested boycott activists to take up the campaign against undocumented workers by circulating a petition asking the Immigration Department to drive undocumented workers from the fields. The petition does not mention the criminal abuse undocumented workers from Mexico receive at the hands of growers . . . La Migra has always complied with growers demand for cheap labor. When La Migra does “enforce” the laws more often that not Immigration police direct harassment against Union members, to the point of murder. The Immigration serves the same racist strikebreaking role and the sheriff departments. Who can believe that La Migra will ever help the union win a strike? . . . Brother Chavez, you have always told us that the farm workers’ movement is a social cause, that the Union will not establish itself in the agriculture industry without the support of millions of other American workers to be generated through mass boycott activity. In this respect the drive to “get the illegal’s” is even a worse tactical blunder . . .and is going to undercut the tremendous support from Chicano’s in the United States, many of whom help hide friends and relatives from La Migra.

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<sup>63</sup> UFW memo on ‘Illegal Alien Campaign’, Box 16, Illegals Correspondence File, WSU Archives.

From an immigrant rights coalition member,

Dear Cesar, Our conference on workers without documents was very successful. We learned a lot from the people, who came with their problems, as well as from visitors from New York and Chicago. The Chicago people, who work for the Cardinal's Committee for the Spanish Speaking, have documented proof that Puerto Ricans (US Citizens) have been mistaken for Mexicans and deported to Mexico. The Immigration Department is also conducting a reign of terror against brown-skinned people in New York. The Rodino Bill will give them more fuel for their Gestapo tactics . . . hoping that the farm workers would be represented. Nobody came forth . . . a few clergymen would like to discuss the illegal alien issues with you.<sup>64</sup>

And from a concerned citizen,

Dear Mr. Chavez, The either/or position taken regarding "illegal's" is wrong. It is a reactionary position, which basically is anti-working class. What is the purpose of a union? Is it simply to have a union? Are Mexican worker non-workers? You may choose to call them "illegal aliens" but I would call them exploited workers . . . La Causa. Mr. Chavez is a message that goes beyond the union hall door, or the fields of California. It travels across the U.S. –Mexican border and beyond, giving a message to struggling workers all over the world. Do not allow it to be turned into another burden to be placed on the backs of the poor who already struggle daily with quiet desperation.<sup>65</sup>

In the face of growing critics and a movement for immigration rights, Cesar publically recognized the abuse of undocumented workers but remained adamant that they should not be employed as scabs, pointing to Nixon and then Ford as ignoring illegal activity in order to support growers against union organizing. By 1975 Chavez ended the illegal alien campaign and

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<sup>64</sup>1973 Letter to Cesar Chavez from Mark Day, O.F.M., Box 7, Immigration Folder, WSU Archives.

<sup>65</sup>Letter to Cesar Chavez from Thomas J. Morgan, Box 16, Illegals Correspondence Folder, WSU Archives.

claimed that the union was now organizing undocumented workers alongside longtime residents. But Chavez switch came late and movement leaders did not get involved in the immigrant rights and immigration reform movements of the late 1970's and early 1980's. With a simultaneous crisis in the farmworker movement, and a growing concern for undocumented immigrants, philanthropic attention disarticulated farmworker movement organizations and immigrant issues from one another. While funding to the UFW non-profits focused solely on services and education by 1979, several past UFW allied program officers from The Ford Foundation, The Field Foundation, and The Rosenberg Foundation grew concerned with Governor Ronald Reagan's anti-immigrant immigration reform proposals and began to work together to build a new platform that would eventually become the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA).

### **Invisible Workers: Foundations Inspire Immigrant Integration**

The first private foundation to publically announce interest in undocumented immigration was the Rosenberg Foundation. In 1978, three years after Kirke Wilson, previously a farmworker organizer in Tulare country, joined the staff of The Rosenberg Foundation, The Foundation's President announced in an annual report,

There are new migrant farmworkers, the "undocumented" Mexicans who have come across the border and are increasingly the source of labor for California farms. But there is a difference between them and the people of "The Grapes of Wrath" and the Mexican Americans of the 1960's. These new people do not exist officially. Everyone involved – government, the growers, the farm unions, and even the migrants themselves –has a stake in pretending they do not exist. And if they do not exist, they have no problems, which are anyone's responsibility but their own. (Rosenberg Foundation 1978 Annual Report)

In the 1978 Rosenberg Foundation Annual Report reporter and scholar Lou Cannon contributed a feature story on the conditions and concerns of the increasingly undocumented farmworkers. The essay revealed that unsanctioned but accepted immigration brings more farm laborers to California than the Bracero program ever did. It also documents fewer units of migrant housing than in 1939, an increase in abusive practices such as

growers deporting workers right before pay day and the lack of provision of shade, water or rest in the fields. In this report Cannon made the statement that despite these enduring problems little public attention was being paid to the suffering of increasingly undocumented migrant workers. From 1978 to 1986, the Rosenberg Foundation increased grants to Central Valley migrant programs, mainly focusing on housing, services, and infrastructure projects.

By 1982 other funders, including the Field Foundation and the New World Foundation supported the Citizen Committee for Immigration Reform, a coalition of advocacy organizations attempting to stem the tide of the Reagan administrations racist immigration reform proposals and to build a new more immigrant friendly reform platform. Throughout the 1980's the Ford Foundation and the Rosenberg Foundation shifted their funding priorities away from the regional farmworker projects and towards national organizations that had more interest and a better handle on issues of immigration reform such as Farmworker Justice Fund which worked on immigration reform and monitoring federal farm labor programs.<sup>66</sup>

In 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) passed with many of the recommendations of the immigrant advocacy coalitions, including an 'Amnesty' for immigrants who entered the country without documentation, a pathway to citizenship program, and fines to growers who hire undocumented workers. Upon passage of IRCA Kirke Wilson of the Rosenberg Foundation launched a comprehensive citizenship initiative to fund organizations to provide legal, educational, and immigration services to immigrants eligible for citizenship under IRCA. My research revealed that while this project enabled a large number of immigrants to naturalize, provided resources for farmworker and immigrant organizations statewide, and paved the way for the successful anti-187 coalitions of the late 1980's, it also contributed to a fundamental shift in funding priorities towards a broad definition of immigrant civic participation and away from the concerns of farmworkers and the farm labor system that relies on constant streams of poor migrant workers.

It was not Kirke Wilson or The Rosenberg Foundation's intentions or strategy to turn funding away from farmworkers and towards immigrant integration, but because the turn towards integration and civic participation

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<sup>66</sup> Grant data collected from the United Farm Workers of America archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.



coincided with the neo-liberal turn of the late 1980's through the 1990's – including the attack on welfare and public services, anti-immigrant legislation such as California's Prop 187, and the fall-out of the LA Riots – this shift converged with the growing aversion in the philanthropic community to any projects that sounded like social welfare, worker rights, or community organizing on behalf of immigrants and the poor. Ironically, President George W. Bush's moderate stance on immigration and his relationship to Mexican President Vicente Fox ushered in new era of opportunities for organizing and funding immigrant communities. However by this time the 'integration' as opposed to 'immigrant rights' or farmworker organizing model had become accepted by many advocates and activists.

The turn towards immigrant citizenship inspired a range of immigrant integration funding networks including the Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees whose aim is to inform foundation staff how to shape funding programs that serve immigrant communities in ways that are approved by often-times conservative or traditionally anti-immigrant boards of directors. The main components of the immigrant integration model, specifically promoted to foundation program officers interested in investing in immigrant communities, include the idea that the hard work of a diverse array of immigrant populations, "have made America the land of opportunity: a nation renowned for self-reliance, freedom, and democracy."<sup>67</sup> Specifically designed to provide program officers with the tools to talk about funding immigrants without scaring off their foundation leadership and boards, GCIR provides a basic non-threatening framework for showing how investing in immigrant communities is vital to local economies and the social and cultural fabric of American society. As opposed to listing the various concerns or 'rights' of immigrants GCIR proposes that foundations could contribute to building and guaranteeing cohesive communities in the face of increased immigration through 6 'Pathways to Integration': Communitywide Planning, Language and Education, Health, Well-being and Economic Mobility, Equal Treatment and Opportunity, Social and Cultural Interaction, and Citizenship and Civic Participation.

Before turning to the ways in which program officers negotiate the ideas of immigrant integration and farmworker organizing I layout the basic

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<sup>67</sup> "Investing in Our Communities: Strategies for Immigrant Integration," A Toolkit for Grantmakers, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, 2007

institutional relationships and decision-making structures that foundation program officers work within.

### **‘Progressive’ Program Officers in ‘Mainstream’ Foundations with ‘Conservative’ Boards**

The immigrant civic participation and integration projects featured in the remainder of this and subsequent chapters are all the product of vision and political negotiations of foundation program officers. In order to understand how these program officers frame programs for farmworkers and immigrants and how they negotiate between the perspectives of grantees and the often times conservative foundation boards, I interviewed ten ‘anonymous’ self described ‘progressive’ program officers who fund farmworker and/or immigrant communities in California’s Central Valley. ‘Progressive’ was commonly defined as a worldview that acknowledges and strives to address social, economic, and political inequity through community organizing, political participation, and increased resources and services for poor communities. The program officers interviewed used varied terminology ranging from progressive, to radical, to social change or systemic change oriented to describe their own work. All but one of the program officers interviewed work at family foundations that employ large staffs that espouse mainstream liberal ideas about mobility, equity, and human and civil rights.<sup>68</sup>

All of the program officers interviewed describe their foundation board members as ‘conservative’ or as having ‘business interests.’ Conservative boards were described by program officers as boards with a majority of members having corporate business interests, an aversion to community organizing or activist approaches or a structural inequality analysis, and embrace individualist self-help approaches. As I found in my research and others have also documented (NCRP 2003, Whitaker 1977, O’Connor 2007), there is often a huge gap between the interests, ideologies, and perspectives of trustees and presidents of mainstream foundations<sup>69</sup> and the

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<sup>68</sup> One program officer was the only staff person at a small family foundation.

<sup>69</sup> Liberal and mainstream are used inter-changeably here to represent the large family and general-purpose foundations that fund programs to ameliorate social problems in education, health, family, and community yet do not embrace specific ideological or political agendas. This broad definition is created *against* the much more explicit approach of conservative foundations as defined by NCRP (2004) as foundations that taking on, “conservative policy that shrinks the federal government’s powers and increases state autonomy; strengthens the hands of business and free enterprise, by promoting a deregulatory ethos; or fighting for individual property rights. Also

often times more progressive program staff. This makes the translating and negotiating roles of the progressive program officer particularly important in mainstream foundations. Before the final section on the specific negotiations of the program officer, I explain the particular dynamic of progressive program officers working in mainstream foundations with business-interested boards.

Conservative (The Heritage and Hume Foundations, for example) and radical (The Vanguard Public Trust and The Needmor Fund, for example) foundations are, in contrast, more commonly composed of smaller staffs and boards that are ideologically and politically aligned (NCRP, 2004). Due to the political and ideological alignment of the small staff of conservative and radical foundations the work of the program officer is often more clearly defined and directed at specific policy change. For example, the Heritage Foundation funds politically charged issues such as ‘right to life’, anti-gay marriage, anti-immigrant legislation, and free market development. While staff and boards of ‘radical’ foundations may also be politically aligned, and more likely to fund immigrant rights and labor issues, they are somewhat constrained by smaller endowments and the constant need to secure funds from other funders and donors.

A senior ‘conservative’ foundation executive at a foundation network meeting in San Francisco in September 2005 described the difference between the politics of conservative and mainstream foundations. In response to a program officer who questioned why ‘liberal’ foundations can’t seem to ‘get their acts together’ and make strategic policy change on behalf of poor and marginalized Californians, the conservative foundation director responded,

Unlike you liberals, our bottom line is a shared conservative ideology that drives our coordination. And it goes back to Frederick Hayek’s 1944 passionate response to the nation’s fear of the socialist fascism being exercised by Hitler, Mao, and Stalin – his “Road to Serfdom” solidified our hard-core belief in freedom and the individual. Shortly after the signing of Bretton Woods and after he released this publication a group of intellectuals, Milt Friedman included, fearful of the state

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included . . . are policies that seek to advance so-called “traditional values,” by promoting, for example, an anti-choice or anti-gay rights agenda.” (P.7).

gaining more and more power gathered in Mount Rellion Switzerland and committed to working together to promote doctrine and policy to guarantee both freedom against the state and freedom of the market economy . . . Adam Smith's invisible hand was and still is our motivating ideology.

Somewhat envious of the unity described by this foundation director, the program officer replied, "And perhaps the left, at least our board members, don't really want to challenge free market capital. The left refuses to put any political or ideological identity to the work they do. The left is more comfortable leaving things fuzzy." Moving back and forth from ideology to philanthropic practices, the conservative foundation director responded by deepening her analysis of the difference between the two ways of grant making,

What conservative foundations do is recognize that it is not us that do the work –it is the people on the ground that we fund. It's a whole network in civil society that we are connecting up. Touting their own leadership and innovation and restraining from full trust and ownership of grantees is the left's mistake . . . ideologically driven conservatives are much more progressive and Marxist than you social program liberals. We want to change what grows from conflictual praxis in civil society, out of the fears of state control and the emerging financial revolution in markets. We don't sit in our offices designing programs. We're out there with the people, listening to them and discussing what we believe.

I use this conversation to show how the work of the 'progressive' program officer, working in 'liberal' mainstream foundations with 'conservative' boards of directors is intensely constrained. Conservative foundations appear comfortable weaving free market ideology into funding relationships and organizing networks on the ground towards specific policy outcomes, while 'progressive' program officers working in mainstream foundations often negotiate murky and multiple theories of change and are not comfortable expressing their own analysis of inequity or directly addressing the socio-economic exclusions poor people experience.

These constraints become complicated and 'muddled' by the fluid and undefined decision-making structure common to foundations. No 'rules' or

even explicit management relationships directly prevent grantmaking that ideologically or practically confronts structural consequences of industrial agriculture, for example. The process of developing funding initiatives, soliciting proposals from specific organizations, managing grants, and measuring outcomes is oftentimes left ambiguous for program officers to experiment with, playing a guessing game with what will excite or what will aggravate the unaccountable and oftentimes unavailable business interested leadership. Of course, the lingering memories of program officers who ‘went too far’ and were made to resign linger in the minds of many of the foundation staff that I interviewed.

The program officers interviewed agreed that a common practice of foundation decision makers is to work in isolation not only from the people that grants and policy-making effect but also from the staff that do the grantmaking work. According to one interviewee, even though the grantmaking process appears open and fluid their board of trustees acts as, “as closed system of power that is rarely confronted because they see themselves as ‘doing good’ and are accountable to no one.” Some viewed this closed and isolated characteristic as a product of foundation leaders’ primary interest in generating recognition for themselves as innovators, not wanting communities or other funders to step into their spotlight. Others directed attention to the limits created by executive staff who are more comfortable listening to professional ‘experts’ and business colleagues than to potential ‘grantees’. And all of the program officers talked about an unspoken code of what kinds of proposals boards will not even recognize if presented to them: namely anything that has to do with workers rights or holding business accountable. So technically given a great deal of freedom but under oftentimes limited and potentially volatile conditions, program officers often spend a great deal of time, with little knowledge to work with, attempting to figure out the hot buttons of their leadership and boards in order to frame issues of social and economic inequity in ways that don’t unsettle decision makers and gets through to funding.

Another characteristic of mainstream foundations is that they seldom commit to long-term funding for particular projects, organizations, ideas, or program staff (National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy 2004). One program officer explains,

. . . it is very difficult to get people to think in terms of a long-term process instead of quick outcomes. For our work to make

a difference we need to take the time to ask communities first what they think, and build relationships and commitments along the way. It seems obvious but foundations really don't work that way – asking communities first. If we took the time to build trust, encouraging different perspectives to come together to come up with different solutions then maybe we could build something for the long term. And then incorporate new 'sound bites' that bring a broader array of people in. . . what I am describing is serious and long-term work.

Conservative foundations on the other hand, make fewer grants but commit large amounts of money to a handful of organizations, public intellectuals, and particular ideas over several years and in many cases decades. For example the Heritage Foundation made a 10-year, \$5million commitment to Samuel Huntington to develop and promote conservative ideologies around immigration and global political economics.<sup>70</sup> Investments from conservative foundations reach nearly \$80 million a year to support media outlets, think tanks, publications, and public intellectuals like Huntington (The National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy 2004).

The self described 'radical' or 'progressive' program officers and the consultants interviewed for this project all find it very difficult to navigate their own mainstream foundations as they attempt to design initiatives in service to social and economic justice. The specific challenge they most frequently referred to is how to frame funding proposals to address inequitable conditions for farmworkers and immigrants in California in ways that resonate with their primarily corporate boards in the economically conservative and post 9/11 political climate. The following section reveals the process foundation program officers engage in and the dual identities and organizing frameworks that emerged.

### **The Program Officer: Negotiating the Politics of Immigrant Integration**

Through interviews with foundation program officers and community organizers, three roles emerged as central to the work of the program officer

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<sup>70</sup> Information available at [www.mediatransparency.org](http://www.mediatransparency.org). See Huntington's most recent book, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 2004.

as she/he navigates the politics of philanthropy: Myth Maker, Capacity Builder, and Talent Scout/Collaborator. Before describing these roles I first discuss the professional power relationships and the often-conflicted identities involved in the work of the program officer.

### **Conflicted Identities: the shaping of professional subjectivities**

The program officer is the one who opens the door. Our challenge is that we never know if program ideas are presenting the real interests of a community or just shaped around money and speaking to the foundation. We also never really know what the trustees will think about programs we propose to the board and so we never know if we can keep the promises made to community groups. Community groups don't realize this. They think we have more power than we really do. – Program Officer Interview, Spring 2006

Foundation program officers are often seen by community organizational leaders as powerful decision makers with deep pockets, directly connected to their monolithic foundations. The program officers interviewed emphasize how far this is from the truth and share how the perception of power often poisons egos and inspires in themselves false visions of grandeur. One program officer put it this way, “When I went into foundation work my IQ immediately increased. People all of a sudden seemed to always agree with me. This felt good and I thought I was really coming up with some good ideas. Then I realized what was going on and became frustrated, because I need a reality check when I am way off. But people don't want to tell you that.” Others talked about entering foundation work with the desire to ‘sit on the other side of the table’, giving rather than begging. Admitting that they may never choose to go back to the ‘begging’ side they talk about the continual need to keep their ‘egos in check.’

With an inflated ego in relationship to the grantee communities, the program officer experiences quite a different power position within the foundation. At once built up and constantly ‘pitched’ to by people seeking funding, the program officer is simultaneously deflated in relation to the executive staff and board. Program officers are themselves several steps removed from the decision-making conducted by trustees and must find ways to make themselves heard and believed by those who make the decisions, the board,

usually under the leadership of one or two board members who play the role of the ‘chief financial officer’ or ‘board president.’ These decision-making members, according to my interviews, usually have the most connections in the business community and with industry – sometimes from a banking background, sometimes from major media networks, and in some cases through long time connections in the broader philanthropic community.

One step below the board of trustees is the foundation President or CEO. The job of the President is to keep the pulse of the board and make sure that all proposals brought to their attention are in keeping with what they will accept. Presidents were described by program officers as gatekeepers, making sure never to let a board member ‘alight’ on a particularly ‘radical’ or ‘questionable’ idea proposed by program staff. Between the President and the program staff is the Vice President. The VP keeps the President up to date on the ideas and plans of program staff as far in advance as possible so that the President can swiftly communicate between the board and the VP what program staff should or should not be talking about. Below the VP is the Program Officer, who may never even meet their board of trustees more than once, depending on the foundation. The soaring ego of the program officer within the ‘community’ is brought back to earth as the program officer works in relative isolation from the decision making process within the foundation.

As they attempt to frame funding initiatives to address issues of socio-economic inequity that will resonate with their conservative boards yet meet the expectations and needs of community groups, many program officers experience a great deal of anxiety,

My personal belief is so different from the board that I always need to be reading everyone at all levels to figure out how to reframe things . . . . It’s like walking on a tightrope, always miss-stepping and falling into landmines . . . . No other time in my life have I had to dichotomize myself in two - me and the foundations beliefs. I need to understand both, know where I stand, and find ways to work between the two . . . . I am really not very good at understanding and reading what is going on in here (the foundation). It’s just such a different perspective and environment that I find my own values being pushed and challenged. It started to really wear me down, to get to me, and I didn’t even realize what was going on. It was in my subconscious.



Images of being ‘split in two’ and ‘walking on tight ropes’ were commonly evoked as program officers explained the internal negotiations of foundation work. How one deals with the dual identities between community and foundation, and the isolation of not knowing how a board might respond to work they invest in varies greatly. The program officer quoted above eventually decided that she was becoming a different and not as productive person in the process of splitting her self into so many pieces and resigned. Another decided not to speak to multiple audiences and to just continue to advocate for immigrant and farmworker organizing: he was eventually fired. A third program officer mastered the language of pluralism, inclusion, and civic participation and found this to be a powerful tool in speaking across different audiences. A young, new program officer still struggles between maintaining her vision and learning how to work within the context of her foundation. One past-activist program officer claims to have ‘blindness’ on to the work of the executive leadership and the board, finding colleagues in other networks to help frame and pitch the work.

### **Program Officer Role #1: The Myth Maker**

Within the context of the institutional decision-making hierarchy the program officer also negotiates the local political climate, regional policy trends, community initiatives, citizen groups, academic ideas and institutions, and other regional foundations as they shape funding priorities. Given their unique role straddling foundations and the messy world of non-profit organizations and local and regional ‘politics,’ we could describe the program officer as a translator, negotiator, or as one foundation consultant interviewed suggests, a ‘myth maker’ -creating compelling myths out of community realities that wow foundation staff and boards and resonate with broader American ideologies of self-help, hard-work, and triumph over adversity – oftentimes obscuring structural analysis of inequity. Each myth contains partial truths, and moves to the mythic as powerful stories of local heroes and community organizations are retold as emergent models for solving enormous problems beyond these actors’ current reach. I use the theme of ‘Myth’ because these stories of change evoke a unified, pluralist future or past while leaving out the current realities that most of the program officers acknowledge need to be addressed.

Interviews revealed how mobility, civic participation, and an array of ‘non-threatening’ funding strategies, or ‘myths’ are increasingly sought after by

foundation staff fearful of boards of trustees made up of predominantly businessmen who will not touch strategies that imply holding ‘business’ accountable. Education and civic participation framings that speak to the enduring American ideals of individual mobility, hard work, and merit become useful ‘myths’ for those aiming to address deeper questions of structural inequity. This is not to say that any of these strategies are false or unimportant in their own right. Instead, what the program officers revealed is that embedded within these framings is a shared perception of the untouchable and unstoppable nature of corporate capitalism in this current political climate, and the incumbent dance around the edges of how to address increasing economic inequity and poverty without unsettling those at the top who provide the resources and political legitimacy to move forward.

Professional myths or in philanthropic terms, ‘theories of change’ are developed and spread through relationships with other foundation professionals, national funder networks and public intellectuals. Several program officers interviewed refer to the work of popular social theorists as key in crafting new frameworks to fund immigrant communities that ‘speak to broader audiences.’ Of particular significance are Michael Fix and Jeff Passel’s Urban Institute reports that contributed significant research on the growing needs of new immigrant populations. These reports also marked a shift away from rights and ‘angry advocacy’ framings to “Immigrant Integration” ideas that promote civic engagement, leadership and skills development. Another popular set of theories is the social capital work as discussed by Robert Putnam in his popular *Bowling Alone* (2000) that defines the social and economic strengths of a community by the depth and breadth of social relationships and civic institutions. Cornelia Flora Butler’s use of social capital theory as an argument for organizing social relationships and John McKnight’s ‘asset-based community development’ (1993) also figure prominently in the shift from rights based to ‘civic relationship’ funding strategies.

One program officer suggests that “The integration and relationship building model became the road map for funding immigrant and refugee work and that was able to get support from (foundation) boards.” Another program officer interviewed explained how when shaping a new immigrant funding area, she first found it difficult to find language outside of the immigration and worker rights framework she was familiar with from her past life as an advocate. Eventually, she called upon a Michael Fix and Jeff Passel Urban Institute report to help her frame a program,

. . . in terms of the American Way – that the immigrants that come to this country are, throughout the history of this country, the most industrious, hard working, risk takers and dreamers. These are the people who made it here. It is not an easy thing to do and takes much struggle and sacrifice. These are the American immigrants. They are not lazy, future welfare recipients. So I frame things in terms of the values people on the board hold most dear. Family, hard work, individuals helping each other and helping themselves. So our programming is around that kind of American civic support and empowerment.

While this story is an important re-framing of immigrant contributions to American society and enabled the program officer to get a new funding area for immigrant groups approved by her board it does not address the pressing problems that she identified as mostly needing attention. Following up on this program officer's framing of American civic virtues, I asked what she would then *not* be able to talk about in her proposal to the board, what she would have to leave out in order to get it approved. In keeping with the other program officers interviewed she replied, "I would never attempt to bring a grant proposal to my board that speaks of challenging economic inequity through direct action organizing, labor or welfare rights, or holding businesses or major industries such as agriculture accountable. Such proposals have been known to cost many a program officer their jobs."

Even though this program officer stated that what immigrant communities in California need most is a full scale worker rights campaign directed at industry and legislators, she was sure that this is an area that no private foundation will touch. The other program officers and consultants interviewed confirmed that over the past ten years private foundations have been increasingly less likely to fund community organizing, immigrant rights, and social and economic justice projects. While never popular, the advocacy and 'rights' based grant making of the 1970's-1980's has been replaced by civic participation and most recently immigrant integration pluralistic theories that draw on the American myth of equitable integration and civic culture that gained popularity in the 1990's. Again, I use 'Myth' because these frameworks evoke a unified imagined model that excludes the actual socio-economic dynamics that the program officers propose, if left unaddressed, will prevent any real sustained change.

One program officer suggests that “The integration model became the road map for funding immigrant and refugee work and as a centerpiece was able to get support from boards, but we still know that change needs to occur in the human rights, worker rights, and economic arenas.” Community organizers interviewed and observed do not fully embrace the current framings of immigrant integration. During a feedback session at a foundation meeting to unveil a new “Immigrant Integration Framework” to California funders, one community organizer grantee present commented,

This integration model could do a lot more to recognize that the problems we are dealing with in our community basically have to do with racism, fear, and the free market system . . . it could also focus on advocacy and immigrant rights a lot more . . . integration also needs to be addressed in terms of integrating this country into the rest of the world. How we are transformed by what is going on around the world and the people that come here from all over . . . when we talk about participation in these models it is often the common perception that we are not active or having any dialogue. This is a misperception. Or fabrication. We are constantly in dialogue around who we are as a people, how we analyze our own situation, and how we want to move forward.

In response to the organizer’s concerns, the presenter, a staff person from a foundation network to support funders interested in immigrants and refugees, replied, “. . .the tougher stuff is implied between the lines in this framework. Organizing, advocacy, legislative reform is not stated but embedded within those categories you see in the model . . . what we are doing now is shopping this model around to more mainstream and conservative funders across the country and they are sometimes reluctant. So that is why the framing sounds like it does.”

Her response to the organizer is symbolic of the bind many program officers find themselves in – trying to figure out how to support communities in the work they need to do without scaring off their more reluctant boards, trustees, and colleagues in the foundation world. One program officer talked about simply deleting any confrontational words, including ‘organizing’, from his grantees’ proposals before sending them to his board for approval. The strategic

myths that “building capital” or “integrating immigrants” will solve pressing problems of poverty and inequitable treatment without addressing the structural workforce and global economies get funding through the door but also risk limiting the nature of the work of granted organizations.

## **Program Officer Role #2: The Capacity Builder**

When asked what the main challenges are when attempting to build funding initiatives for poor migrant communities in California’s Central Valley, every program officer answered with the ‘low organizational capacity’ in the region. When asked to define capacity, most interviewed answered that Valley organizations and leaders lack various leadership and organizational skills including: hiring and training effective boards of directors, managing a multi-year budget, filing taxes, receiving audits, training and managing staff, managing client services, writing grant proposals, and evaluating program outcomes. Some interviewed saw it as their role to help ‘build the capacity’ of local groups to receive grants, and others, out of frustration, decided not to make grants to many organizations in the region.

The role of the program officer as a capacity builder is told through the example of a major foundation initiative to address the extreme poverty and poor health experienced in farmworker communities in California’s Central Valley<sup>71</sup>. In its fourth year at the time of this research, a major foundation is adjusting program frameworks and managing multiple consultants and non-profit, private, public, and philanthropic partnerships. According to an evaluation consultant to the project, the foundation program officer in charge was interested in framing the work in terms of ‘building the social capital’ and community organizing capacity of migrant communities and connecting them to services, health care, housing, and insurance providers. For the purpose of this chapter, I will call the initiative the Farm Worker Project (FWP). The main funder, who will be called The Foundation (TF), is committing \$50 million dollars over five years to this Central Valley initiative.

Many large foundations, like TF, will not make grants less than \$50,000 because they consider less than this amount as an investment that may not show measurable returns. Foundations are often concerned with how they

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<sup>71</sup> This initiative is the topic of and will be described in greater detail in Chapter Five.

can extend their grantmaking “down to the grassroots” to unincorporated or small organizations with minimal budgets without spending significant amounts of time “building the capacity” of local groups to receive larger grants. There are relatively few non-profit organizations in California’s Central Valley, as compared to the Bay Area and Southern California, and foundations often find it difficult to launch large-scale initiatives with so few organizations to fund to implement the work. In order to extend their reach and possibilities for the FWP, the TF partnered up with another large funder and made a grant to a smaller foundation, which I will call Capacity Builder, to “build the capacity of smaller immigrant groups’ across the Valley.” According to the program officer of the Capacity Builder foundation, “The ultimate goal is to develop more organizations that the TF can fund for their Valley initiatives. There are virtually none in some parts of the Valley – but lots of small groups of people doing good things. So now we need to help them become fundable organizations – from Bakersfield all the way up to Shasta.”

While the program officer of TF developed the larger framework and brought on the main partners of the initiative, the Capacity Builder program officer spent time building the capacity of smaller groups to apply for funding once they are ‘ready.’ She describes the main bulk of her work as,

. . .teaching people what kind of language to use in grant applications, how to put together a work plan, goals, objectives, activities . . .how to do more large scale financial management, accounting, etc. so that they can handle larger grants . . .for example, TF told us that if we spend the time building the capacity of [Indigenous Mexican organizing group] then they will be able to fund them. So I helped them learn larger scale management techniques, got them a few small grants, even nominated [local organizer] for a Ford Foundation award which he got, and now they are fundable.

The nature of the capacity building technique used by program officers reveals a contradictory duality. While ‘capacity building’ does in fact provide greater access to resources and power for small organizing groups like the Indigenous Mexican group mentioned above, in the process it also changes the nature of the organization’s work. A staff person with this organization expressed dismay with being “stuck doing desk work and not organizing anymore.” She explained how she was grateful that her

organization now has more funds and legitimacy but is fearful that it is no longer serving the direct and changing needs of the indigenous farmworker communities they claim to serve. A long time farmworker organizer expressed similar sentiments about the changes he has seen in his organization over time,

After I left the UFW, I got a job working with the Office of Economic Opportunity. They paid farm worker organizers big salaries so most stayed on. But they kept us away from the strikes so I left after too much time sneaking out to do the real organizing . . . Later foundations came in and were equally rigid but in different ways. It became all literacy and services and no organizing. Now people are trapped on computers . . . planning programs and writing reports. We need to be accountable to communities, to people and their schedules and not to our meetings and foundation deadlines. We can only see the damage this kind of thing does when something dramatic happens. Like that year when there was a bad winter freeze and all of a sudden there was no farm work. We need to be flexible enough to say ‘to hell with the English classes. These people need to eat!

Another organizer puts it this way,

What is frustrating about our work with [collaborative partnership] right now is that nobody is really organizing. All this planning and trainings and no organizing. If new money comes to us through the new [TF] Farmworker project I want it to go to organizing. And you can’t train an organizer over night or at a training like some people think you can. You have to walk in the muck, get contaminated with pesticides like everyone else. I’d like to get some of those grants but the new partners that are selected on the basis of who has the best verbiage. It’s all about language, proposals, how you argue or present it, and also the connections you have, who you know.

The words of these organizers show their keen awareness of the double-sided nature of the program officer and consultant’s capacity building work. Knowledge of foundation language, management skills, and organizational development better enables them to get grants to ideally fund more

organizers to identify the problems farmworkers most want to confront but simultaneously requires that they spend more time on organizational management that takes time and resources away from the ‘real work.’ These choices are hard ones to make when, as the Capacity Building program officer explains, capacity building ultimately prevents local groups from getting ripped off by the many Bay Area groups and consultants paid to do work in the Valley who end up using the time, expertise, and even organizational resources of Valley groups without paying them. Many feel that it’s a “learn to play the game or get ripped off” set of choices. This ‘capacity building’ program officer is now starting an environmental justice network among Valley groups organizing around air quality, industrial pollution, and pesticides, so that they can both work alongside, rather than beneath the Bay Area advocates and experts, and so that they can make alliances beyond the Valley with global environmental justice groups.

### **Program Officer Role #3: The Talent Scout and Collaborator**

Another double-sided strategy used by program officers while launching large scale initiatives is scouting out and connecting up multiple organizations into one large collaborative. Like capacity building efforts, this strategy enables the program officer to fund more groups and potentially increase the reach and impact of the initiative. Much like the double-sided nature of capacity building, this approach simultaneously enables more groups to attain resources, connect up with one another, and form strategic alliances while also significantly changing and sometimes limiting the nature of their work. One interviewee expressed these concerns with the regional collaborative model:

As soon as we lost our funding from one foundation we all start running to the next. It’s crazy that as a group [our last collaborative] that is supposed to support immigrants we were too busy with collaborative meetings and could not together decide how to address all the abuses after 9/11, the Patriot Act and everything. And now we are all meeting to figure out how to get money from the next big thing, TF’s farmworker project. If we’re really interested in important things we would be organizing and not going to the TF to change our work and focus . . . Our work with immigrants will end. No one in foundations *really* wants to change things for immigrants right now.



According to a consultant working on TF Farmworker initiative, most of the smaller partners of TF's farmworker initiative are shifting direction (at least on paper) as new RFP's are released. From this consultant's perspective, they are all trying to 'divine' what the program officer has in mind and are busy organizing themselves and each other around getting the funding but not organizing actual farm workers. As the program officer scouts talent, recruiting partners and soliciting grant proposals, his idea of the goals of the potential collaborative also shifts according to the red flags and bumps in the road along the way. The consultant interviewed further complicates this partnership building process by describing the internal foundation decision-making process at TF as, "similar to a dissertation committee" where ". . . by the time you are through with an idea you don't know where you started." So joining a major initiative like this one is a gamble for community groups, with the program officer dancing between the board, the staff, advocacy organizations, the growers, the hired consultants, and the service agencies before landing on a solid plan of action.

With grants to several farmworker and advocacy organizations in the southern San Joaquin Valley, the purpose of TF's collaborative approach, from the main program officer's perspective, is to form locally driven farmworker alliances with the ability to confront enduring health and related community problems experienced by farmworkers and their families. Using a combination of community organizing and asset based development approaches, the ultimate goal is to mobilize farmworkers for 'self-directed organizing' and to build consensus on the issues with community stakeholders, service delivery providers and growers. With three years of 'planning and development', the lead agency working with the foundation claims that the collaborative process and farmworkers' capacity to speak up in collaborative meetings is still too fragile to encourage farmworkers to address or even identify any issues to tackle. While the program officer initially envisioned collaborative committees including farmworkers, growers and other 'powerful' stakeholders to together tackle regional health issues facing farmworker families, it was quickly realized that the farmworker representatives were not positioned to voice their concerns as equals alongside the more powerful collaborative members. So in the third year of the initiative resources were allocated to leadership training for local farmworker representatives identified by the lead agency of TF's initiative.

This type of work obviously presents serious challenges to addressing the labor, environmental, and health problems farmworkers face on a daily basis, especially during the lifetime of a five-year funding commitment. The program officer of this project was already expressing concerns that the “outcomes oriented board of trustees” may say they believe in the community building process but will not reinvest in the project without proof of measurable health outcomes in the short term. How long will trustees invest in building the ‘capacity’ of farmworkers to sit at the table, as equals, with growers and local politicians? Is this consensus model even realistic? What issues will inevitably be left out of discussions with growers? Does shifting from the historic farmworker organizing model pioneered by the UFW and American Friends Service Committee to a collaborative consensus model seriously limit future organizing trajectories? Or are local advocacy and organizing groups simply paying lip service to the foundation’s model and using the new granted resources to build organizing campaigns around the substandard water, pesticide, and labor conditions plaguing farmworker communities? And will growers and the industry advocates ever rally behind these causes? These questions are explored in both Chapters Four and Five.

From the perspective of the program officer, the negotiations involved in setting up multi-stakeholder collaboratives are necessary in establishing partnerships that can effect political change within shifting policy climates. One Bay Area program officer provides insight into what from her perspective an effective foundation organized collaborative partnership might look like,

Change happens when authentic relationships are formed. We try to match make and put people and organizations together that could have a greater impact if working together but we can’t always make the connections that will really work and last. So I take a lot of risks . . .do a lot of meeting with people, networking, researching and querying about who ought to be working together, shape collaborative funding strategies and then see if it sticks. Sometimes from within the work, which I know from the time spent as Director of [large bay area non-profit to serve immigrant families and communities], we can’t see where access and openings really are. Where organizations might want to position themselves politically. The program

officer has a unique access and vantage point to see these natural linkages.

When asked for a practical example of how she forms ‘authentic relationships’ this program officer provides a case where she carefully researched a local policy issue and scouted out allies and organizations to act as ‘watchdogs’, ensuring that the programs and policies implemented are at least not as punitive or damaging to immigrant communities and families as they otherwise would have been without funded partnerships of strategically paired groups,

Here is an example: take family childcare. I think it is important in any family childcare policy that we make sure to have elements that maintain the immigrant’s family culture and language programmatically before implementing the limited school readiness and outcomes stuff. So I need to think about how to spin a ‘family based and family centered’ approach over the more common day care center and early childhood schooling approach and bring community partners along while I simultaneously convince my board . . .it helps when you have a background in the communities you work with. For example, I know many of the youth organizations, which really helps. I can have an open conversation with this group if I know them. . . We look for waves. For example, I know another program officer at [another foundation] is all over this so we have breakfast, discuss the issues, give ourselves a month to get the plan, open a call for people to come to us for funding support, insert a larger vision, and make sure that other foundations are doing it with me. Then we look for the cbo’s, intermediaries, and public and private funding partners. I look to see where the values coalesce and where the shared interests are around the current policy opportunity. I act kind of as a coach, prepping cbo watchdogs. I tell them, ‘you got to watch this initiative because it deals with language and culture, keep on them!’

Keeping on top of local policy issues, the organizations that can play ‘watchdog’, and the potential funding allies, the program officer acts as a ‘silent’ catalyst, scouting out and forming new political partnerships as issues emerge. Describing themselves as ‘staying fluid’ or ‘following waves,’ the program officers follow shifting

political climates, opportunities to organize, and the direction of public and private spending. Describing how she negotiates the current climate around immigrant families and education the above program officer explains,

We are in a shifty political climate right now. I am now trying to ride the ‘school readiness wave.’ What I need to figure out is what to hang my hat on in order to ride this wave. For example, the effort to institute universal pre-school in San Francisco through Prop H makes me ask myself whether I will jump on this band wagon and make it happen the way I want to see it done or will I let others define it . . . so when I commit, what I do is pull people and organizations together to make sure that it is family based, implemented in low income neighborhoods, and done in ways that low income communities want . . . I natter around in my colleagues ears. . Work between the public and the funder on the language stuff. This language stuff is really important. For example, we need to investigate how the 227 law is written in a way to show people how it applies to early childhood on monolingual issues. Then we leverage with our allies, make sure the right people are in the right places. I need to be confident with the non-profit ED’s and people starting up the initiative. Then I can talk to people and say ‘If I were you I’d make sure to deal with the race issues first, etc.’ Get our own plan in order and out the door.

This program officer believes that the key goal of spending so much time on partnership building is getting immediate policy results in the best interests of immigrant families – in this case, everyone gets preschool in an equitable and culturally relevant manner. Her example shows the potential for program officers to facilitate the convergence of third sector organizing, political will and public and private money. It also reveals how constant, dogged and politically attuned a foundation program officer must be in order to effectively address issues as they emerge. In her words, “You have to be opportunistic and make it how you want it to be rather than pulling away.”

Her work also reveals how reliant any funding partnership is on the political climate of the time. For example, a program officer from another foundation was able to support broad based immigration reform campaigns (SB 245i, AB 540) across the Central Valley for several years in the 1990’s but, post

9/11, after the re-election of George W. Bush and a change in leadership in his own foundation, lost support for the collaborative and eventually his job. Every program officer interviewed agreed that the federal and state policy shifts away from immigrants were very severe after 9/11 and intensified with the Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) raids under the second Bush administration.

## **Conclusion**

These examples of how the roles adopted by program officers can limit or leverage significant change across a new well-developed nonprofit sector is reflected in the words of my first program officer informant. He explains his role in negotiating philanthropic power through the tale of Frodo and the Ring. In Tolkein's classic *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo, the noble Hobbit, inherits the 'Ring' from his Uncle Bilbo. Quick to recognize the corrupting powers of the 'Ring' Frodo must keep it away from the Forces of Darkness in order to protect the Hobbits and the Forces of Light. The Forces of Darkness are temporarily shaken by Frodo's possession of the Ring but he knows he must somehow get rid of it before it corrupts and destroys him. Foundations, this veteran foundation staff member explains, have the unique opportunity to confront the societal problems that extreme wealth generates by granting portions of that very wealth to under-represented and marginalized communities. However, once the 'granted' organization or funded initiative ceases to address the problems it originally sets out to confront, once it has tasted power itself, gained a new political position, or solidified into a rigid institution unable to move with the needs of its constituents it risks "becoming the master, distancing itself from the roots from which it sprang."

In this chapter I introduce the role of the 'progressive' foundation program officer in negotiating funding frameworks and relationships from above and below. In keeping with a view of civil society as both containing and promoting class struggle in civil society, the work of the program officer is both liberating and limiting as it opens up spaces for immigrants and farmworkers to confront inequitable conditions in their communities. Viewing the program officer as 'doubly' identified - as mythmaker, capacity builder, talent scout and collaborator - contributes to a Gramscian theory of philanthropy and society by moving beyond theory and looking at how power is negotiated in practice.

As myth maker we see the program officer as the communicator of ‘concrete fantasies’ (Gramsci in Forgas 2000) that shape individual identities and organizing alliances that might maintain or contest the dominant power system. As scout and collaborator we see how the struggles over the framing of an issue is connected to broader social and economic structures in what Gramsci calls the War of Position in civil society – the terrain on which class struggle is contained and promoted. During the post 9/11, anti-immigrant time ‘progressive’ foundation professionals are seeking ways to frame immigrant and farmworker issues that are not dismissed by foundation boards at the onset and have the potential to invigorate grassroots immigrant organizing, yet that simultaneously risk limiting what is possible to achieve on the ground. Foundations, before and after the historic Farm Worker Movement, will fund projects that address poverty, but not the economic relationships that produce it. They will fund projects that help migrants or immigrants integrate, but they won’t fund immigrant organizing or projects to address the economic institutions that rely on the exploitation of undocumented immigrant labor. This is the terrain that the program officer negotiates.

We also found how the education, professionalization or ‘capacity building’ of grassroots immigrant organizations and leaders is also a central to the work of the program officer. In Gramsci’s theory of struggle in civil society it is the training and education of working class people and organizations that either generates consent or the capacity to resist. The development of educational programs where, “working class people can become intellectually autonomous so that they could lead their own movements without having to delegate decision making to career intellectuals,” as opposed to “technical schools that become incubators of little monsters aridly trained for a job, with no general ideas, no general culture, no intellectual stimulation . . . of their own is key. The nature of educative processes of the program officer was revealed as both limiting and positioning grassroots organizations.

While this chapter set out to complicate rather than wholly reject a Gramscian theory of philanthropy and society, there are serious questions that a Gramscian framework cannot address. What do particular organizing frames, such as social capital or immigrant integration actually accomplish or allow? What do they exclude? How do and don’t they mobilize people? To answer these questions Nikolas Rose’s (2004) use of ‘governmentality’

(Foucault 1986) theory allows an analysis of the power of ideological and technical framings to govern human and organizational conduct. Governmentality theory questions how power is maintained by ‘getting people to act how we want them to act, freely and of their own will’ and suggests that research expand beyond restrictions and limits placed upon people to include common ‘scientific’ or popular truths, professional management systems, or even accepted conceptions and practices of health, for example, that people govern themselves by. Instead of looking at the ‘outcome’ or temporary consequence of a specific funding initiative, methods might include tracking ideas and how they are spread through relationships between trustees, program staff, grantees, and associated partners as they work together through trainings, evaluations, partnerships, and reports. This lens helps us see “circuits of power at the molecular level” often hidden by explanatory modes concerned primarily with larger historical and ideological trends.

Additionally, a Gramscian frame cannot adequately address the race, gender, and class subjectivities produced that support or confront philanthropic frameworks. What kind of professional and client identities are promoted by or resisted in foundation programs and frames? Feminist theory (Fraser 1994, Naples 1997) proposes ways to engage multiple race, class, and gender subjectivities that support or change the dominant development framework. Nancy Fraser (1990) suggests that by looking closely at the officially recognized kinds of language used within certain professional or policy circles and the ways these framings position the people they address we gain a better understanding of the patterns of domination and subordination involved.

This is not to say that an initiative, institution, or policy sector is “a coherent, monolithic web,” but rather that it is, “a heterogeneous field of diverse possibilities and alternatives . . . where groups compete to establish their respective interpretations.” (Fraser 1990) . These are all questions under investigation in the final two chapters, which are case studies of philanthropic initiatives to address the concerns of immigrants and farmworkers in California’s Central Valley.

## Chapter Four

### **The Hurricane or the Tornado: The Rise of the Philanthropic Collaborative**

#### **Introduction**

Unlike today when foundation endowments have been severely damaged by the financial crisis and donors are reigning in grants to only the most established non-profits, philanthropic giving in the late 1990's was marked by generous experimentation in new regions and through large-scale initiatives. Through investments in the unprecedented real estate, dot.com, and finance boom the assets of California foundation endowments nearly doubled between 1990-2000 (Council on Foundations, 2000). Also during this time, neoliberal policies such as deregulation of industry, the lowering of wages, increase in part time service work, and the shrinking of the welfare state enabled the dual pattern of an unprecedented increase in corporate wealth and a growing divide between the rich and poor (Reich 2008). For the Central Valley this meant a rapid restructuring of the agricultural economy that, in the face of global competition, increased its reliance on low wage labor-intensive immigrant labor, which deepened entrenched poverty in disenfranchised migrant communities. Reflecting the paradoxical practice of philanthropy, many foundation initiatives of the late 1990's attempted to use expanding philanthropic resources to address the pressing issues of poverty and inequity that neoliberal wealth generation created. One of most popular strategies to 'spend out' the enormous windfalls in foundation endowments was through the form of the 'collaborative initiative.'

Historically the most poorly funded region, the Central Valley, received an unprecedented amount of foundation grants in the mid to late 1990's, often in the form of large-scale collaborative initiatives (GVC 1999, James Irvine Foundation 2003). Many farmworker and immigrant serving organizations were invited to participate in these collaborative initiatives and as a result received more foundation funding during this time than ever before. While the increase in philanthropic investments in Central Valley farm worker serving organizations was clearly welcomed, many long time organizers were aware that philanthropy, that is money, is a blunt and potentially disruptive organizing tool to address the long standing poverty and abuses experienced by Valley farmworkers and immigrants. Through my research, and my own professional involvement in foundation collaboratives of farmworker and immigrant serving non profit organizations, I learned how organizations born out of the California farmworker movement weathered and, in many instances, were co-



opted or transformed by the dual retrenchment of state programming and funding for the poor, and the rise in philanthropic funding and professionalization of the 1990's. Today old time organizers who came of age during a hopeful and risk taking social movement are keenly aware of what has been lost as they develop non-threatening service or 'civic participation' programs in keeping with current funding priorities.

Of particular concern to nonprofit leaders who found their voice during the movement is the constant reshaping of organizational priorities and programs in an effort to gain funding under the trend of 'collaborative initiatives.' Many fear that generous multi-year grants given to organizations to participate in collaborative initiatives create apathy among organizational managers tempted to build institutions and philanthropic relationships instead of collective organizing agendas. Usually initiated during strong economic times and abandoned when endowments shrink or political climates shift, 'collaborative initiatives' organize multi-agency partnerships that bring unprecedented resources yet also create new and temporary foundation created program frameworks, partnership meetings, and evaluation and reporting requirements that often times distract from strengthening or building new organizing trajectories across the region. This chapter explores the institutional arrangements of the philanthropic 'collaborative initiative' and the relationship between movement organizations and private foundations in non-movement times, through an investigation of one of the largest farmworker-immigrant collaborative initiatives in the Central Valley. For the purpose of this chapter this collaborative will be called The Stewart Kinney Foundation's Immigrant Participation Collaborative (IPC), which received over \$5million a year from 1996 through 2003.<sup>72</sup>

Founded by a program officer at The Stewart Kinney Foundation, the original goal of the IPC was to build civic and political participation among immigrants across the Central Valley through the work of a well funded collaborative of immigrant and farmworker serving nonprofit organizations. Uncovering the sometimes victorious and sometimes tragic histories and enduring movement spirit of the IPC partners, many of whom organized and marched alongside Cesar Chavez during the early years of the Farm Worker Movement, re-energized my belief in social movements and my commitment to grassroots organizing. However, despite my immense appreciation for the courage and dedication against the odds of many IPC partners, it was my observations of this collaborative that raised significant questions and concerns about social movement organizations that increasingly rely on private funding, especially

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<sup>72</sup> Because some of the research subjects interviewed for this chapter agreed to anonymity under the Human Subjects protocol for this project, all of the individual and organizational names are disguised to protect the identity of those guaranteed anonymity. Reports cited are also disguised as to not reveal institutional affiliations of foundation staff and grantees.

under new institutional structures such the ‘collaborative initiative.’ How do the ideas and professional practices promoted by foundations change the nature of farmworker and immigrant organizing? How do long time leaders, participants, and organizations engage with large scale funding initiatives that are not necessarily connected to the history of organizing and repression in the region? How do financial relationships between larger and smaller granted organizations disrupt or reproduce organizational turf and competition? How do they open up resources and spaces for new alliances and organizing trajectories across the region and beyond? And what happens to collaborative partners once the foundation withdraws funds after the average 3-6 year funding commitment? These are among the questions I set out to explore in order to understand how collaborative initiatives structure the work of long time movement organizations.

My study of the IPC has implications for, and also beyond, the long history of farmworker organizing across California’s Central Valley. The foundation ‘collaborative initiative’, perhaps the most popular institutional funding strategy throughout the 1990’s and early 2000’s, first emerged in response to increasing cuts to state and local public services and programs initiated during the Reagan administration in the 1980’s, and a series of welfare reform initiatives from the 1988 Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) to the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Welfare Reform Act). The earliest collaborative initiatives were designed to create a ‘safety net’ for the increasingly disenfranchised poor by linking welfare recipients up with job training, childcare support, and social services as they prepared to enter the workforce. Other initiatives were inter-agency partnerships between schools, nonprofit organizations, and healthcare providers to fill the gaps in service delivery for poor children and families previously provided by public departments.

Significant critiques have been made of inter-agency approaches to welfare reform as increasing training requirements, responsibilities, and stigmatization of the poor while providing no family support or jobs at the end (Fraser 1994). The concept of the ‘shadow state’ (Wolch 1990) also became a popular analytical framework to describe the trend of incorporation, professionalization, and the creation of dense networks of nonprofit institutions to replace public human services and programs founded by the state through the New Deal and the Great Society. Building on the shadow state framework, an emerging ‘Non Profit Industrial Complex’ (NPIC) body of literature, introduced in the previous chapter, goes as far as to argue that the, “emergence of a white liberal hegemony over the non-profit industry during the 1970’s was an explicit attempt –in fact an authentic conspiracy of collaboration among philanthropists and state officials . . . to dissipate the incisive and radical critique of US white supremacist

capitalism, the white supremacist state, and white civil society that was spreading in the wake of domestic Black and Third World liberation movements” (Rodriguez, p35).

Like this literature, this dissertation thus far has shown how the investments and actions of private funders and nonprofit organizations have played a significant role in the transformation of American social movements and the cooptation and professionalization of social movement institutions in the decades following the 1960’s. For example, as detailed in Chapter Two, private foundations reluctance to fund the United Farm Workers of America (the union) and encouragement that the movement expand it’s nonprofit service institutions such as the National Farm Worker Service Center (NFWSC) provided an easy retreat from worker organizing when the movement faced serious internal and external challenges. However, I also found that the retreat away from worker organizing and towards professionalization and nonprofit management was not a result of a philanthropic-state partnership with clear articulate conspiracies of rule. The shifting priorities and alliances within and across the farmworker movement were a combined product of direction repression at the hands of local growers, state police, an increasingly grower friendly government and labor contracting system, disorientation and competition introduced by the government through the War on Poverty programs, and significantly an internal movement crisis that led leaders to retreat from organizing to institution building. The internal shift of the UFW strategy from a social movement to a major union to a social service provider, and the change in funder interests from farmworker rights to immigrant integration were shaped by oftentimes contradictory combinations of the interests of institutional actors, broad political and economic challenges, shifting movement strategy and of course the temptations and promises of the philanthropic sector.

While the goal (and in many instances the accomplishments) of the neoliberal right in the decades following since the 1970’s may have been to quell resistance and devolve social services to privately funded nonprofit agency networks with specific political and economic limitations, that does not necessarily mean that incorporated movement organizations fully embrace this agenda or cease to strategize around ways to rebuild movement organizing in the face of daunting challenges and limitations. This dissertation’s contribution to the discussion of the role of private foundations in supporting, quelling, controlling or redirecting social movements is not a confrontation of the NPIC argument but rather a call to investigate and engage directly with how organizations born out of movement times negotiate their relationship with private foundations. While the NPIC and Shadow State approaches have captured the significant shift away from public programming and an increasing incorporation of

grassroots organizing into professionalized nonprofit institutions with set limits and boundaries, it does not explain how movement organizations interpret, accept, or reject the specific forms of management used by private foundations, including the ‘collaborative initiative’ that became dominant in the 1990’s. How have inter-agency collaborative initiatives supported or re-organized social movement organizations and alliances? What are the specific ideas and organizing frameworks struggled over between collaborative funders and grantees? And what are the consequences for social movement organizations engaged in the large philanthropic initiatives? As has been shown in the previous chapters, it is important to ask these questions because findings reveal that the ideas and institutional arrangements promoted by private funders are not always impenetrable, unitary conceptions that fully govern grantee subjects, but are rather created and reworked in the context of the often changing and conflicted ideas and contexts of social movement actors and organizations.

In this chapter I argue that foundation funded collaborative initiatives in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s functioned less like an organized shadow state or NPIC and more like temporary disorganized conglomerations with power, definition and agency operating at the edges in the leadership of single agencies or small organizational clusters – like a shifting weather system. Unlike social movement funding that directs the development of institutions to moderate aspects of a broader social agenda as shown in Chapters One and Two, and unlike the implementation of a shadow state or Nonprofit Industrial Complex that formalizes and coordinates grassroots organizations to replace the power and legitimacy of a formal state with a new depoliticized governing apparatus as explored in Chapter Three, the philanthropic collaborative initiative is better described by its dis-organization. Often with no explicit governing structure, no shared sense of purpose other than receiving foundation grants, a constantly shifting problem analysis created by funders and not participants, and an unwieldy union of unlikely partners selected by funders, the foundation collaborative is akin to, “a cluster of tornadoes where funnels are constantly emerging and disappearing, but with no apparent center and capable of heading off in an unforeseen direction at any given moment” as described by one observer of the IPC. While a social movement, union, or re-organized state have the potential to function more like a hurricane, where there is a concentrated energy with a clear direction for forward momentum, the foundation collaborative is limited by its various ‘disorganizing’ structural arrangements with foundations and with one another.

I propose that through three central ‘dis-organizing’ institutional arrangements philanthropic collaboratives bring renewed and unprecedented resources to historic Farm Worker Movement organizations, yet increase institutional competition and turf battles, and produce bureaucratic processes that distract leadership from forming

organizing agendas that address the enduring poverty and abuses experienced by migrant workers. The first institutional arrangement that pushes the power of partnering organizations to the edges, rather than building strategic power and alliances, is the philanthropic ‘theory of change’ – in the case of the IPC a pluralistic approach to immigrant civic participation born in the context of neoliberal ‘social capital’ programming. The IPC’s pluralistic ‘social capital’ approach was ultimately incapable of addressing the long standing structural inequity experienced by Valley farmworkers and immigrants, especially in the context of the growing abuses of immigrant rights in the wake of 9/11.

The second institutional arrangement explored is the problematic of using money as an organizing tool. The unspoken, unaccountable relationships of power through foundation grants create distrust and competition and stifles opportunities for unified action as they arise. In addition to each organization ultimately being held accountable to the foundation, not to one another, individual organizations are also directed by multiple grants and boards, and not by the collaborative center. Sometimes in foundation funded collaboratives there is a convergence of interests under specific political circumstances, and partners form successful alliances and organizing campaigns, as is also shown in this chapter.

The third institutional arrangement that contributes to the pattern of tornadoes or disorganization rather than a unified hurricane or movement is the foundation driven selection of collaborative partners. Unlike institutional alliances shaped in social movements or directed organizing campaigns, where shared identity, analysis, and enemy often define partnerships, and unlike a union with clear membership, constituents, and leadership, philanthropic collaborative partners are often selected by foundation staff without knowledge of previous partnerships or rifts between selected organizations. Collaborative partnership meetings often function like blind dates where partners engage in courting activities, checking each other out and tentatively agreeing to work together as they wait for common interests, concerns, and opportunities to emerge. The result is oftentimes a reluctant marriage that lasts only as long as the funding commitment to each individual organization.

Building upon the findings of Chapters One and Two about the particular dynamics and dilemmas of philanthropic investments in the farmworker movement, this chapter investigates the relationship between funders and movement organizations, in non-movement times – how current funding frameworks not only maintain the separation of social from economic equity, as explored in Chapter Two, but also how collaborative institutional arrangements, in the absence of a broader movement ethic, ideology, or political agenda, maintain a safe distance from the critical issues affecting

farm worker and immigrant communities. This chapter explores three central institutional arrangements of the collaborative initiative (the foundation driven theory of change, the approach of using money as an organizing tool, and the foundation selection of partners) as a way to understand how social movement organizations negotiate the oftentimes disorienting shifting of priorities and institutional approaches of private foundations in non-movement times. After introducing the context of the founding of the IPC, I show how pluralistic ‘theories of change’ in the context of the rise in neoliberal policies shaped the opportunities and limits of the collaborative. The next section shows how money as an organizing tool directs power to the edges and prevents a collaborative strategic center from addressing the increasingly urgent concerns of immigrants across the region, state, and nation. The implications of philanthropic ‘match-making’ from above and how the trend in uniting ‘unlikely partners’ limits the scope of organizing campaigns and alliances is discussed throughout.

Ultimately I propose that throughout the 1990’s and early 2000’s organizations born out of movement times were more challenged by ‘dis-organization’ prompted by re-fashioning their work to fit collaborative institutional relationships than they were by a ‘re-organization’ into a service providing, governing shadow state. I propose that governance through dis-organization provides a more nuanced lens than presented in the NPIC or Shadow State approach to understanding the opportunities and limits of the nonprofit sector. In this investigation of the emergent form of the philanthropic collaborative initiative, I used primarily three methodologies: semi-structured interviews with collaborative partners and foundation staff, analysis of secondary professional communications, and participant observation including participation in collaborative partnership meetings, regional conferences, and foundation network gatherings. In order to understand the dominant funding frameworks employed by the Stewart Kinney Foundation, I reviewed a variety of foundation reports, program materials, and web communications.

### **Founding the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship: a window of opportunity**

#### **Turning Towards ‘The Other California’**

Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s the rapid expansion of “low-wage immigrant-intensive” agriculture (Martin 1997) and the active recruitment of undocumented workers from poor regions in Mexico, with increasingly fewer services and rights in the U.S., exacerbated an already impoverished farm worker population across California’s Central Valley. In the public imagination, it is hard to remember that less

than three decades ago the California farmworker population was made up of primarily Filipino, white and African American citizen workers, expected to move out of farm labor as mechanization decreased the need for low wage, labor intensive jobs. However, with the halting of mechanization research and the recruitment of low wage immigrant workers, pockets of extreme poverty in farm worker ‘colonias’ in the Central Valley and poor pueblos in Mexico became inextricably intertwined. Unlike during the height of the Farm Worker Movement when the ‘illegal alien’ campaign aimed to distinguish between local and immigrant workers, efforts to improve the lives of farmworkers in the 1990’s became deeply connected with issues of immigrant integration.

At the same time that industrial agriculture expanded its low wage immigrant labor force, anti-immigrant sentiments in the state heated up. With the 1996 Border Enforcement Act, Welfare Reform Act, and the 1995 Campaign 187 to deny public services to immigrants, there was a significant shift in advocates’ strategies from immigration policy (how many and what kinds of immigrants enter the United States) to immigrant integration programs (how we support immigrants that are already here).<sup>73</sup> Recognizing that many immigrants living in the United States were experiencing a decline in services and increasing poverty and harassment the immigrant integration model became the new framework for organizing and advocating for farmworker and immigrant communities. Building upon the historic citizenship work of the Rosenberg Foundation, several California foundations became concerned with addressing farmworker and immigrant conditions in California’s Central Valley.

The increasing polarization of the rich and poor in California also led funders to the Central Valley, perhaps one of the only regions that suffered during the high tech boom of the 1990’s. In addition to the expansion of Mexican immigrant farm labor and poverty, rapid development from the Bay Area and Los Angeles encroached upon Valley communities. Commuters and displaced low wage workers left wealthier regions with sky-rocketing rental prices for the poorer towns strung along the interior valley highways -compounding a situation of poverty created by the farm labor system. Today the Central Valley is the poorest region in the country, with more families living below the federal poverty line than anywhere in the United States (Brookings Institute 2006, 2008). Off the main highways and paved roads in the Valley’s southern San Joaquin County, settlements of migrant farm workers still live

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<sup>73</sup> This trend and the ‘immigrant integration model’ is introduced and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

in sub standard housing with no or seriously limited, and in some cases nonexistent, infrastructure systems such as water, roads, police, and social services.<sup>74</sup>

With increased endowments and corresponding output requirements The Stewart Kinney Foundation and The Western Foundation granted an unprecedented amount of funds to Central Valley farmworker and immigrant organizations, totaling over \$5million a year each between 1996-2003<sup>75</sup>. Re-energized by public and private resources to provide citizenship services under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and the 1995-96 battles against proposition 187, many organizations founded during the historic farmworker movement positioned themselves to receive grants under the new Kinney and Western Foundation ‘collaborative initiatives’. The ways in which historical movement organizations engage with these two 5 million-plus dollar a year collaborative initiatives are explored in this, and in the final, chapter.

### **The ‘Collaborative Beast’**

As the large-scale initiatives supported by the federal government, such as Model Cities or the Community Action Programs of the War on Poverty, were phased out in the 1970’s there was a substantial expansion of initiatives shaped by private foundations in response to the Reagan-era cutbacks in government assistance programs of the late 1980’s. Alternately termed ‘comprehensive community initiatives’ to ‘systemic change’ or ‘collaborative’ initiatives, the new large-scale projects created and managed by private foundations throughout the 1990’s shared several common elements. To confront the shrinking public welfare system and growing inner city and rural poverty, the programs usually promoted a concept of self-improvement or self-help. The self-help concept of the 1990’s was commonly articulated in a theorization of ‘social capital’. Unlike the citizen action and self-help (or self-determination) strategies of the 1960’s that initially focused on training leaders for collective action, the new social capital or civic participation approach focused more on building trusting and entrepreneurial relationships that might nurture social and economic development and integration for communities increasingly abandoned by the public sector. Whereas the old self-help approach was designed to

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<sup>74</sup> While beyond the time frame of the CVP and the scope of this chapter, today the financial crisis and drought have together created sheer panic for both farmers struggling to maintain profit and farm labor communities struggling to survive. An unprecedented alliance of farmers and workers is now organizing for new guestworker programs (UFW, 2009) and in protest against environmentalists and legislators who have enacted water conservation policies (Fresno Bee, 4/17/09).

<sup>75</sup>Both foundation names are disguised as per the Human Subjects protocol for this project.



hold public systems accountable, the new citizen engagement was meant to hold individuals accountable, to counter welfare dependency and create self-reliant individuals, institutions, and neighborhoods.

Most collaborative initiatives also attempted to make a comprehensive or systemic analysis of the problems they aimed to address – to connect social service, health, economic, and educational institutions to one another when designing solutions to local or regional problems (Parachini 1997). Many took an ‘asset based’ approach (McKnight 1993), preferring to identify the strengths and resources in a neighborhood or region as opposed to identifying a problem and specific target, the common model of the federal programs and social movements of the 1960’s. The initiatives of the 1990’s were most commonly organized through partnerships between non-profit organizations, as opposed to citizen groups, funded by a single foundation that designed and managed the collaborative process. The two collaborative initiatives that I studied and describe in this and the following chapter share the common qualities described here.

Unlike the philanthropic pattern of founding new organizations during the social movements of the 1960’s, foundation contributions in the 1990’s was more commonly marked by large-scale initiatives that required existing organizations to follow foundation designed plans and visions. I also discovered that while privately funded multi-agency partnerships were partially inspired by the ‘systemic change’ approach pioneered through Welfare Reform programs, the ‘collaborative initiative’ mainly became a popular funding strategy during the 1990’s as a simple result of foundations’ need to spend more money as endowments swelled from the increasing wealth across the United States. Foundations often pride themselves on not just providing charity but rather on experimenting and innovating in civil society where government and business cannot. Because by the 1990’s foundations had no need to form new nonprofit organizations where there was considered a glut, the creation of large-scale foundation initiatives became one of the most popular funding approaches where foundations could still innovate and make a mark.

Also unlike the 1960’s approach to build new social movement institutions (many of which still exist today), foundation collaborative initiatives are often poorly planned and short lived. Reflecting on the dot.com boom of the 1990’s, several of the California foundation program officers I interviewed discussed how they were directed to find ways in which they could spend the excess endowment gains as quickly as possible (per the Tax Reform Act legislation requiring minimal outputs), and were encouraged to create multi-agency initiatives or collaborative structures to fund with little planning and little time to get money ‘out the door’. Between 1996

when the tech economy was booming and 2005 when the dot.com bubble burst, several California foundations invested in multi-agency, multi-million dollar a year collaborative initiatives. By 1997 many of these foundations produced reports on why these initiatives were discontinued due to failing to meet their initial goals<sup>76</sup>. While these assessments provide honest and important feedback to both funders and grantees, I found that the reports' major 'lessons learned' never included the unavoidable dilemma that large scale philanthropic initiatives are only ever launched and maintained during good economic times, and suddenly de-funded with the slightest turn of fortunes –when organizations need and are positioned to strategically use funding the most. Choosing instead to focus on faulty 'theories of change' and insufficient planning and evaluation these reports failed to address the inherent problems associated with foundation driven institutional arrangements such as the philanthropic theory of change itself, the foundation selection of partners, and the challenges of using money as an organizing tool – all of which became defining 'dis-organizing' feature of the Central Valley Partnership. As one program officer put it, "When foundations don't follow local situations and issues closely and all the time, or make long term commitments and work with leaders to really figure out how their work compliments each other over the long haul -these things just become unwieldy collaborative beasts that nobody really wants to manage . . . they often want to make a big splash and then move on to something else . . ." (Program Officer Interview, 2007)

Because collaborative initiatives commit substantial resources to partnering organizations including individual grants, meeting and travel costs, and technical assistance they are incredibly attractive to both grassroots organizations in search of the rare multi-year funding commitment and to foundations in search of a way to increase their impact, reach and spend-out on endowments during good economic times. While many organizations benefit from the multi-year funding and additional support associated with being a partner in a foundation collaborative, they also risk engaging in a disorienting process of re-organizing organizational leadership, programs, and alliances to fit collaborative structures and requirements that only last as long as the economy and political climate allow foundations to invest in experimental initiatives. This is particularly true for liberal/mainstream foundations that unlike conservative or right wing foundations tend to commit to organizations for fewer years and prefer vague social programs while avoiding taking a stand on confrontational political issues.<sup>77</sup> It is the unplanned (or abstract planning from above)

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<sup>76</sup> Hewlett 2007, Irvine 2007, London and Richardson 2007, 'Facing Up to Failures' as reported in a New York Times article of that title (Strom, 2007) and a Chronicle of Philanthropy article titled, "Foundations Seek to Become More Open About Mistakes They Have Made," (Chronicle of Philanthropy, April 5, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> As described in Chapter Three.

nature of collaborative initiatives that dis-organizes regional alliances – creating temporary institutional arrangements with power operating at the edges with no strategic center. The following sections illustrate how the institutional arrangements of the IPC disorganized institutional alliances across the Central Valley.

### **Founding the IPC: From Shit-Kickers to Relationship Builders**

The Stewart Kinney Foundation’s Immigrant Participation Collaborative was founded in 1996 and shared many qualities of the comprehensive community building initiatives of the 1990’s, including its social capital approach and collaborative organizational funding model. According to a Kinney Foundation program officer interviewed, Kinney’s collaborative civic participation approach emerged during a strategic planning process in the mid-1990. Through this process the foundation decided to end funding to individual direct action and organizing institutions and instead invest in broad based civic collaborations that might provide more integrated support systems to communities struggling with declining public supports. The Foundation also proposed that collaboratives would have ‘more impact’ in that organizations would be required to work together under a foundation planned initiative. This collaborative approach was partially inspired by the social capital literature of the day including *Bowling Alone* and regional social capital literature which was being passed around by a program officer from another foundation<sup>78</sup>. This outside program officer was intent on convincing The Kinney Foundation’s Civic Participation program area to support a Los Angeles area regional civic participation collaborative around organized religion. Created by the Kinney Foundation President in the aftermath of the LA riots, the Foundation’s ‘Civic Participation’ program area originally made grants to individual organizations addressing race relations and leadership development in the wake of the LA Riots. In collaboration with other regional foundations, the Civic Participation program eventually invested in faith based collaboratives in Southern California and the Central Valley.

During the time of The Kinney Foundation’s strategic planning the foundation’s endowment swelled as investments in the regional tech economy boomed. The Foundation was required to increase its grantmaking in order to keep up with the endowment output requirements under the 1969 Tax Reform Act. In this context, Kinney Foundation program officer John Sibley was able to sell the Central Valley immigrant collaborative to the board by turning attention to a region the foundation never significantly funded before, and pointing to the many organizations that already

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<sup>78</sup> These reports are not cited in an effort to protect the identities of the foundation staff interviewed.

worked collaboratively on naturalization and citizenship education after the 1986 IRCA legislation passed and in the campaign to defeat proposition 187. Since Sibley had been approached by Valley organizations looking for funding to build upon the citizenship and immigration work they had initiated through The Rosenberg Foundation<sup>79</sup> (and other farmworker projects), he proposed instead of funding these organizations individually, to design an experimental collaborative model. It was the right timing, with increased output requirements and the new collaborative social capital ideas in the air, and the board approved what would be named (by The President of the foundation) the Immigrant Participation Collaborative (IPC).

According to Sibley, after the new Kinney Foundation strategic plan put a few regional collaboratives in place never again did they fund individual, “shit-kicker institutions like the Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO),” as Sibley put it. According to Sibley, his pitch for the IPC was successful because it was more about civic learning and integration, not ‘shit kicking’ or direct action organizing. In the context of the rapid increase in California’s immigrant population and in the aftermath of the organizing against Proposition 187<sup>80</sup> it was important that he speak in terms of integrating immigrants into civil society as opposed to organizing immigrant and farmworker populations. The anti-community organizing legacy of the Reagan Era, compounded by welfare reform’s self-help ideology, and an anti-immigrant climate Sibley explained that the new problem statement that the foundation leadership and board approved, read something like this, in his words,

“In a place of such diversity the way to go is to build a pluralistic democracy – the board buys stuff like this – you build the democracy as you build the community. Jim Gether (father figure of the Ford Foundation) always says ‘(Sibley) is always trying to talk about things in terms of learning, knowledge, skills.’ This is they way I talk but I also believe in it. You can choose talk about direct action organizing or you can instead talk about problem solving. The key is to never frame things in a way that you bring up a red flag for the board. He (CEO) always said to never let the Board alight on any particular issues. Once the board disagrees with a program officer they are gone.”

Not only was Sibley in tune with what his board of directors would or would not pass through to funding during an era of welfare reform, anti-immigrant policy, and a focus on social responsibility, he was also inspired by and believed in the new approach. As mentioned above, before forming the IPC Sibley received several unsolicited letters of

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<sup>79</sup> The Rosenberg Foundation’s long history of funding farmworker organizations is detailed in Chapters One and Three.

<sup>80</sup> Discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

inquiry from farmworker and immigrant serving organizations looking for new funding. At Sibley's suggestion several leaders from these organizations designed a trip to the Central Valley, including organizational visits and a tour of a Central Valley farm labor camp in Woodville. In recalling his discovery at a Woodville migrant camp (the same camp that Kirke Wilson took his board, and a program officer from the 'Western Foundation' would take his board 8 years later), where a migrant run community center educated and organized migrant families, Sibley claimed that even though he romanticized this moment in his memory it nonetheless changed him and inspired a belief in migrants coming together, teaching one another as they were engaged in local problem solving. The activity he observed, the visions of children joining together in community centers, the stories the leaders told him of collective action and problem-solving inspired a 'theory of change' based on solving problems through learning and relationship building that shaped the IPC and endured in Sibley's funding approach.

In keeping with the immigrant integration model discussed in the previous chapter, Sibley proposed that, "only immigrants could improve conditions in immigrant communities –that relationship building, education, organizing, and shared action are the keys to lasting change."<sup>81</sup> The IPC's approach to solving the long standing problems faced by farmworkers and other immigrants to the Valley was described as, "build (ing) a broad, strong, and diverse network of relationships to promote civic problem solving and immigrant engagement in public life." IPC partners (including organizations built during the early days of the farm worker movement, socials service organizations, and legal aid agencies born out of the War on Poverty) were originally recruited by foundation staff and asked to outline ways in which increased 'immigrant civic participation' might improve conditions in Valley communities, how they might work with others to support immigrant civic participation across the region, and how they might learn from and assist one another. They were not required to provide an analysis of problems or the political, social, and economic relationships at play in the Valley or corresponding strategies to affect change. Civic engagement, learning from one another and building relationships was understood as the goal in and of itself. The IPC partners were also encouraged to govern themselves and create new projects and campaigns for the foundation to support.

Like in Sibley's case, foundation collaborative initiatives are commonly envisioned and initiated by program staff at a single foundation that then invite non-profit organizations to submit proposals to receive funding as a collaborative partner. There is usually a process internal to the foundation for developing a 'theory of change' –a

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<sup>81</sup> Foundation Report, 2002

set of proposals about how social change occurs and how a community might solve a set of identified problems. The ‘theory of change’ often guides the planning, development and evaluation tools developed by the foundation. After discussing the partnership vision with a couple of the original invited organizations, the IPC was officially founded in 1996. In addition to the civic participation theory of change, Sibley explains the approach of the IPC as expanding upon the frame of citizenship initiated by Kirke Wilson of the Rosenberg Foundation (described in the last chapter, which focused on providing a pathway to formal citizenship after the Amnesty granted under IRCA) to include the social, political, and cultural citizenship as articulated by a multiple-organization immigrant civic participation collaborative. Sibley convinced The Kinney Foundation to invest over 3 million a year to the project. The IPC grew from four partners in 1996 to twenty-one in 2002 including community organizing, legal assistance, popular education, social service, religious charity, and applied research non-profit agencies –some of whom had worked together during the farm worker movement and some who had never worked nor perhaps ever anticipated working together. Together partners designed new programs (such as leadership training, re-granting programs, youth organizing, and a cultural arts festival) and launched organizing campaigns around issues including an effort to count ‘under-counted’ populations in the U.S. Census, and a senate bill 245i proposing legal family reunification for non-documented residents. From 1996-2002 the IPC received an excess of 5 million dollars a year in individual organizational grants, private consulting and program support. The remainder of this chapter discusses how IPC partnering organizations took advantage of and were organized and ‘disorganized’ by engaging in the model of the philanthropic collaborative initiative. Before discussing how partners engaged with the IPC I provide a context for the partnerships’ philanthropic ‘theory of change.’

### **Civic Participation for What? Philanthropic Theories of Change in the Neoliberal Era**

The chasm between rhetoric and reality is common to many public bureaucracies. What is unprecedented is its practice on a world scale with such tremendous global consequences. –Michael Goldman, in *Imperial Nature*, 2005

## **Introduction: the rise of social capital theory**

In this section I introduce the emergence of the ‘social capital’ theory of change and how the Steward Kinney Foundation’s version was presented, rejected, and sometimes used by IPC collaborative partners. I argue that theories of social change created in philanthropic networks require grantee organizations to re-conceptualize their own work, sometimes creating frustrating or disorienting bureaucratic processes and sometimes shaping useful political opportunities. Most critical studies of philanthropy and imperialism (Roelofs 2003, Arnove 1989, Li 2001, Mitchell 1991 ) describe the ideas and practices of elite institutions as if they hold complete sway over their institutional and resident subjects and in doing so fail to recognize that ideas shaped by powerful institutions are not always embraced or enacted by the people they aim to manage or change. In other words, ideas handed down by funders, developers, and program managers do not always ‘stick’ or shape the actions of organizations when applied on the ground, and often times are simply ignored after an organization is successfully granted money. Philanthropic ideas or ‘theories of change’ do however, have a disorganizing effect in that they require any organization that wishes to receive funds under a given framework to describe the purpose and strategies of their own work in these new terms. I argue, alongside development scholar Michael Goldman (2005), that the ‘myths and fictions’ created by funders are often very different than what people working on the ground see and experience and that these world views created by elite institutions have significant consequences. In the case of farmworker organizations this meant describing how to ‘engage immigrants in civic life’ and not how to take on the abuses of the farm labor system.

The ‘social capital’ approach to immigrant civic participation theorized by The Kinney Foundation program officer converged on a larger map than California philanthropic networks and boardrooms. Adding to the regional economic crisis and anti-immigrant sentiments of the 1990’s-early 2000’s, the neoliberal and isolationist politics in the United States and around the world drew from long standing cultural deprivation ideologies and conjoined them with fear based anti-terror tactics re-shaping political sentiments in places like the Central Valley. For example, author Victor Davis Hanson’s (a family farmer and classicist at California State University, Fresno) opinion pieces in regional and national news outlets (eventually published in the highly publicized book, *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming*, Hanson 2003) evoked fears of “massive illegal immigration from Mexico into California . . . coupled with a loss of confidence in the old melting pot model of transforming newcomers into Americans”. Hanson played on a nostalgic longing for a small town past where ‘good Mexicans’ learned English and inter-married with Anglos, for an imaginary place and time where ‘they’ all want to become like ‘us’. By joining together popular negative

representations of immigrants, overpopulation, and a static conception of culturally 'deficient' groups that threaten capitalist economic stability and 'progress' Hanson and a cadre of others (including Huntington's *Who Are We*, 2004) re-articulated an assimilationist and fear based political agenda calling for immigrant integration and acculturation as opposed to immigrant rights or linguistic and cultural diversity.

Generously supported by private philanthropy these texts became part of the contest over public understandings and political will throughout the 1990's-early 2000's. Investments from conservative foundations reached a near \$80 million a year to support media outlets, think tanks, publications, and public intellectuals like Huntington and Hanson (The National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy 2004). Huntington alone received \$5million from conservative foundations between 1985-1999.<sup>82</sup> The cultural deprivation ideology that these texts and 'public intellectuals' unleash and work alongside the programs funded by more liberal foundations. One such philanthropic 'theory of change' that while not intentionally used alongside yet that articulates with the isolationist and fear based mentality, and was heavily invested in during the late 1990's, was the social capital and civic participation model.

First explored in the global development context, social capital theory became an organizing framework for World Bank development projects. Sociologists employed by the World Bank (Woolcock 1998) theorized the economy as 'embedded in networks of social relations that collectively make up the social structure' (Granovetter 1985). Focusing on the weak or untrusting relationships between individuals in poor communities, rather than the restructuring of societies and institutions through capitalist development, social capital projects appealed to grantmakers and government institutions adverse to confronting global economic relationships or holding powerful institutions accountable. Much social capital theory, such as articulated in popular global theorist Francis Fukuyama's book *Trust* also support projects to move away from state structures towards privatization. Fukuyama argues that it is the communal authority of homogenous societies, such as historic Germany and Japan, and not state structures or 'modern liberalism' that ensure strong economies and societies. For Fukuyama it is immigration, diversity, dissention, and strong liberal states that weaken trust among citizens.

Thus it is not inconsequential that social capital theories became popular frameworks for global development and for United States projects aimed at quelling rebellion (L.A. riots for example) in the inner city and reforming welfare programming

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<sup>82</sup> Information available at [www.mediatransparency.org](http://www.mediatransparency.org)



(Clinton's Welfare Reform Act for example) during the 1990's. Responsibility and accountability for social capital projects rests with citizens and not funders, corporations, or the state. By naming social capital and 'trust' as the glue for economic development and social progress, the role of global capitalist competition in breaking or damaging existing social ties is disguised. Productive social organization is also limited to integration or mobility approaches where resistance or distrust of state or corporate institutions is seen as counter productive. 'Good' social actors become the ones who form non-confrontation self-help projects and 'bad' citizens are those who distrust, resist, and attempt to hold accountable the major governing institutions of society. In the World Bank context social capital approaches to development include micro-credit lending associations, peer based insurance sales and recruitment, and participatory planning to inform donor projects. It has been argued that empowerment and participatory approaches to poverty alleviation served to placate the rising challenges to the neoliberal structural adjustment policies while simultaneously allowing international finance and policy institutions to deepen their relationships with poor regions throughout the world (Weber 2002).

Unlike Hanson and Huntington, who make explicit fear based arguments about the dangers of immigration, diversity, and confrontational styles of community organization, many social capital scholars make more subtle claims about what kind of social capital is desirable and what kind is not. In the context of the United States philanthropic networks Robert Putnam's take on social capital was particularly influential. Putnam (1993) claims from his early studies of local government in Italy that levels of social trust, reciprocal relationships, and membership in civic associations embedded in a society are critical components to effective governments and economies. In Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, wildly popular in foundation circles, he laments the decline in membership in bowling clubs and home owner associations, arguing that the 'self-interested' organizing of the 1960's elevated individual rights and in the process eroded community ties. Calling for mutual support, cooperation, and trust over conflict and grievances, Putnam and his social capital research team at Harvard University's Saguaro Seminar inspired a wide array of 'civic renewal' and 'civic participation' philanthropic projects designed to strengthen social relationships and voluntary associations. Since the mid-late 1980's this approach to community development has been widely embraced by a diversity of political and socio-economic interests, and in multiple places and contexts, with intentions (or interpretations) ranging from community driven reform and change (Gaventa 2001), to volunteerism programs that replace programs once resourced by and coupled with the interests and actions of the state (Hyatt 2001, Cruickshank 1999), to approaches that more explicitly foster local buy-in to and relationships with capitalist development (Weber 2002, Peet 2003).

## **Ideas that don't stick: presenting, rejecting and re-conceptualizing social capital**

The implications for community based organizations receiving volunteeristic social capital frameworks and directives from private funders have been described in the terms of the new Shadow State (Wolch 1997) or governmentality (Cruikshank 1999) where professionalized relationships and expectations turn dissenting citizens into disciplined self-governing subjects through ideas of the responsible individual who is motivated to correct for and take on the role of the once supportive welfare state. However, contrary to a theorization of unitary control, I found that while the ideas, techniques, and boundaries drawn by managers and governors in the third sector did in fact speak to the advanced liberal style of self-governance, they did not always stick. In fact, I found that many organizational leaders rejected the framings popular at the level of foundation networks and discourse. In this sense, I argue that while immigrant civic participation and social capital initiatives were framed in concert with the neoliberal social and political trends of the time, these framings and program structures did not achieve the 'Political Art of Combinations' (Rose 1999) required to fully govern conduct or organize alliances and agendas. In order for movement organizations, such as those in the IPC to embody and successfully govern through the ideas, programs and techniques passed down to them by funders, they must actually make sense, speak directly, logically and commonly to the people they aim to govern.

I found that while the IPC partners re-organized themselves in order to receive funding, they did not naturally embrace or internalize the social capital framework of the foundation. I found that the IPC was presented, received, and rearticulated within multiple and often contradictory frameworks, leaving room for managers and partners to define the work differently in different contexts. Sometimes the partial or re-worked framings served to obscure issues of structure inequity, sometimes divided rather than united partners, and sometimes provided new ways to address the pressing issues facing immigrant communities. So instead of describing The Kinney Foundation's social capital approach as a complete governing framework that controls and re-directs partnering organizations and leaders, I show how certain ideas and organizing approaches work together or against one another as opportunities and challenges present themselves to an unorganized conglomeration of agencies across the region.

### *Presenting immigrant civic participation*

John Sibley, the IPC's program officer, presented the approach of the initiative differently in different contexts, with a diluting or disorienting effect. To all audiences

he proposed that the way to solve the long standing problems faced by farm laborers and other immigrants to the Valley is to, “build a broad, strong, and diverse network of relationships to promote civic problem solving and immigrant engagement in public life.”<sup>83</sup> When speaking with IPC partners and allies in the Valley he extended the ‘participation’ goals to confronting the socio-economic structural problems and inequities experienced by migrant farmworkers, SE Asian refugees, and poor immigrant communities in the Central Valley. However, when conversing with or producing written documents for Kinney Foundation leadership or the general public, spoke mainly of the inherent ability of ‘participation’ and ‘trusting relationships’ to strengthen social and economic life. In this way, the program at one moment aimed to build social capital to protect people from the inequities wrought by capitalism (in keeping with Bourdieu’s original theorization of social capital, 1986) and at another perhaps unwittingly placed the focus on building up civil society to foster capitalist economic integration processes (Putnam 1993).

One example of how the double meaning of immigrant civic participation was negotiated came from an experience in which I was a participant observer. Three years after the collaborative was founded the program officer was interested in communicating the work of the partnership to broader funding networks. During this time I worked in partnership with foundation staff, consultants, and the IPC organizational leaders to create colorful brochures, websites, mailers, and even Valley bus tours designed to direct the attention of statewide and national funders to the IPC’s farmworker and refugee organizations. Recognizing that The Kinney Foundation would not support the partnership forever, the IPC program officer was concerned with attracting new funders to sustain the work that he founded. This was not an easy task as many funders prefer to support their own creations and are often reluctant to adopt projects founded by other foundations. Aware of these challenges, we had to make a convincing pitch of both the need in Central Valley immigrant and farmworker communities and the unique ability of the IPC to address these needs.

The materials we produced often pictured hard working immigrants coming together to solve community problems but avoided direct critiques of the agricultural industry that created the circumstances of migrant poverty that we claimed to address. Some of us involved in ‘marketing’ the IPC were conscious of the political rationale for what we chose to represent and what we chose to leave out, what we thought other funders would find compelling and what they might find off-putting. While we drew from the then popular civic participation and community building theories, most of us believed that for any real changes to occur in the Valley the industry would need to be

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<sup>83</sup> Foundation Report 2002.

held accountable for the historic and enduring labor, health, safety, housing, legal, and cultural abuses experienced by the migrant workers that make agricultural wealth possible. Some believed that confrontational ‘old school’ direct action organizing strategies would never work and that a more neutral relationship building, civic engagement approach would be the only way to improve conditions for the Valley’s poor. And some embraced structural and pluralist, individualist and collectivist views all at once. We discussed how direct reference to the abuses of the farm labor system did not have a place in materials presented to foundation boards weary of a workers’ rights or business accountability focus.

While working with the IPC I began to see how, despite the diversity of understandings held by nonprofit professionals, the specific organizing agendas of partnering organizations were ultimately hidden by the foundation’s civic participation and pluralist framings. The story of proud migrant farmworkers taking control of their own lives through education and civic participation was powerful and partially true but ignored the obvious structural barriers most partners hoped to take on. This doubleness of language obscures the structural analysis when speaking at the foundation level and forces the initiative to publicly live within the more neutral or mainstream conception of social capital or civic participation. Many IPC partners respected the program officer’s spoken commitment to issues of inequity but felt that the ‘participation’ approach touted publicly and in all official foundation documents masked the real issues at stake and ultimately served the interests of the foundation in remaining ‘politically neutral’. Here we see how a well meaning program officer helps the foundation to play its role as producer of status quo ideas as he convinces partners of his more radical stance yet is unable to confront the political issues at stake, such as the historic inequitable, racialized immigration and labor patterns in the Valley when promoting the work of the partnership to philanthropic networks. From this vantage point ‘immigrant civic participation’ became a discursive strategy that ultimately creates ‘immigrant’ subjects to integrate into the mainstream, despite the structural concerns of the community groups and well-intended program officer. It also confused many partners who were continually required to self-edit what aspects of their work they could showcase at the foundation level. For example, the IPC’s cultural exchange festival was highlighted in the foundation’s annual report but the immigrant rights coalition founded by partnering organizations was ‘not’ to be a part of the public IPC.

### *Rejecting immigrant civic participation*

All of the IPC partners interviewed expressed frustration with the ambiguous ‘immigrant civic participation’ language and framework. While organizing themselves under the immigrant civic participation banner in order to receive funds, partners did not necessarily buy into the conjoining of these terms. For Sibley the coupling of

‘civic participation’ and ‘immigrants’ as a community development strategy includes the notion that by building human capital (individual skills, voice, attitudes, behaviors), social capital (networks of relationships), and institutional capital (membership based organizations) immigrants can “Become full, contributing members of democratic life and . . . improve conditions in matters affecting their lives” (Interview with John Sibley, 2004). While many partners agreed on the importance of building the voice, networks, and institutions of Valley immigrants, when interviewed they showed their frustration with the terminology by asking “civic participation for what?”<sup>84</sup> Some suggested that the language avoided the material conditions and concerns of their constituents and suggested the partnership take a stand on participation for immigrant rights in the face of INS (later ICE) raids that increased after 9/11, for Amnesty leading up to the immigrant mobilizations of 2006, or for ‘the Union’ for those who came up out of the UFW movement.

Some partners questioned an “immigrant” framing that sets up a citizen/immigrant dichotomy and evokes a ‘we belong here’ and “you belong elsewhere” framework that works against the partnership’s goals of democratic engagement. By breaking down the phraseology or ‘discursive formation’ (Fraser 2004) employed by IPC partners revealed the contradictory meanings embedded within. ‘Participation’ may simultaneously mean de-politicization, ‘citizenship’ may by definition include exclusion, and ‘immigrant’ may inscribe diverse groups into one political subject. In most instances the IPC members did not themselves buy into or internalize the seemingly neutral ‘immigrant civic participation’ language yet were still inclined to participate in partnership meetings and collective projects in order to continue to receive funding. Because the foundation never required the partnering organizations to develop a shared analysis of the problems Central Valley immigrants faced, the term remained vague and lacked the ability to organize partners across institutional and home country origin lines.

In many instances the social capital framing did not succeed in building trusting relationships between the diversity of immigrant groups represented by partnering organizations. Some felt that the term ‘immigrant’ universalizes a group of diverse identities including migrant farmworkers, SE Asian refugees, and American citizens that have different needs, interests, and identities. This became a particularly contentious problem as the program office recruited and funded SE Asian and indigenous immigrant partners to work alongside the traditional Mexican farmworker serving organizations that grew out of the movement. Three out of four of the original organizations of the CVP were founded during or directly after the farmworker

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<sup>84</sup> Anonymous interviews with CVP partners were conducted in 2004 and 2006.

movement and consider their work as primarily serving migrant workers. A couple years after the founding of the collaborative the foundation invited organizations that serve South East Asian refugees to join the IPC. The following year the foundation invited an indigenous Mexican organizing coalition and a primarily Anglo-led Christian faith-based organization to join the partnership. One partner's experience with the reluctance of long time farmworker movement leaders to embrace refugee and indigenous populations reflects the difficulty in framing the partnership around a unified concept of immigrants,

I was a speaker at a conference of (two partnering organizations) and said that (they) need to involve Mixteco groups because the indigenous population is growing so rapidly and are the most abused farmworkers today, and they both said no. I even brought some Mixteco leaders to the meeting to talk about the demands of their communities. (One staff person) who had been there since the movement days stood up and says, referring to the new indigenous worker population "These people will work for anything. They are driving down wages and standards." I think these movement people and governors of (the established organizations) have professionalized jobs and they don't see what is going on in front of them anymore, how racist they have become. Racist and professionalized. (Interview with IPC Partner, 2008).

In this instance, the well-established institution rejected the concept of immigrant as an organizing framework as they were more concerned with time of migration and labor status. In their mind it would be against their best interest to join in a partnership to engage a broader spectrum of immigrants but at IPC meetings still spoke the language of a unified immigrant civic participation. Similar comments were made by other partners about the SE Asian refugee organizations as being privileged by their historical relationship with the public welfare system and that Asian Refugees therefore should not be given priority by the partnership or the foundation. Others questioned the faith-based organization's white evangelical leadership and their interest in joining the partnership. The 'immigrant civic participation' theory of change offered might have had potential to unite the diversity of partnering organizations but without organizing a collective analysis of immigration, poverty, and work across the Central Valley – it remained a meaningless phrase. The professionalization and hardening of movement organizations and the history of competition and turf battles between partnering organizations was also extremely difficult to overcome –especially in the absence of a unified movement ethic and agenda. For many the new 'language' only served to mask or repress the broader struggles that social movement organizations have been involved in.

### *Negotiating immigrant civic participation*

The conjoining of the immigrant and civic participation framing also created spaces of change as political opportunities arose. For example, several IPC partners came together to pass a Senate Bill to grant un-documented immigrants state drivers' licenses. Joining other advocates across the state, partners turned the campaign into a public safety issue. Using the language of 'immigrant civic participation' IPC partners argued that due to lack of public transportation many immigrants drive without licenses to and from work, to pick up their children at school, or to go to church and this presents a public safety hazard to pedestrians and other drivers. In order to protect public safety *immigrants must take drivers tests and be provided with official licenses in order to behave like responsible citizens*. The immigrant 'they' must drive safely as a licensed driver like 'us' and responsibly carry the proper identification that provides both the rights and responsibilities of citizens. With intense organizing across the IPC network, and the context of a heated State Governor election, the bill was passed. However, as articulations are never fixed and are open to constant re-appropriation (Hall 1985), then newly elected governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's team turned the conception of public safety on its head, arguing that it is not the unsafe driving environment but the immigrants themselves that we must fear. At the time of research, the evolving 'War on Terror', increasing ICE raids and the image of terrorists hiding behind undocumented immigrants applying for a drivers licenses helped this re-articulation to temporarily stick and the bill was repealed. It might also be possible that small resistances like the drivers license organizing back-fire and re-inscribe the 'oppressed other' in the immigrant subject (Roy 2003). For example, the next turn in the driver's license legislation was a proposal from conservative legislators to pass the bill with a new clause guaranteeing that the cards of non-documented residents carry a special mark or color labeling the cardholder as different and easily identifiable to law enforcement. How partners were specifically organized or re-organized around the institutional structure of the IPC and its immigrant civic participation framework is detailed in the following section.

## **The Hurricane or the Tornado: money as an organizing tool**

### **Introduction**

The negotiation of power and meaning between funders and grantees does not only take place in the realm of program frameworks, ideology and discourse. Through large-scale initiatives foundations also bring individuals, organizations, institutions, and resources together in new ways. As mentioned earlier the Kinney Foundation

program officer originally recruited four organizations with history and ties to farmworker issues and struggles to form the IPC. In the decades following the heated battles of the farmworker movement these organizations incorporated into nonprofit organizations, competing for limited federal and private funds. Many rifts formed during this time and remain unresolved between organizations and individuals who once worked together.<sup>85</sup> The program officer envisioned re-uniting these disparate factions from the ‘movement’ to together address the pressing immigrant rights issues emerging after the passing of Proposition 187<sup>86</sup>. What he did not realize was the extent of the damage done by the institutionalization and competition fostered by the growing non-profit sector in the Valley throughout the 1970’s and 80’s.

The IPC was generally organized through quarterly meetings in one or a few of the partners’ hometowns, usually Sacramento, Modesto, or Fresno. For the first couple of years partnership meetings were spent primarily on relationship building between the collaborative partners who had a long history of turf battles for both members and funds since their incorporation as movement organizations during the late 1960’s. The first unified campaign that the partners came together around was a to change Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) law to allow for immigrant worker families, often with both legal and some undocumented members, to stay together. Referred to as 245i, this bill prompted action among members of the IPC and other immigrant advocacy groups across the state and nation. It was the first, and some considered the last, successful joint organizing effort of the IPC.

By 2001 an additional 17 organizations were invited to join the partnership. These new organizations represented a wide variety, and in some cases territorially competitive or politically antagonistic, community organizing institutions that served a broader demographic of immigrants beyond Mexican migrants.<sup>87</sup> By this time the quarterly partnership meetings were a space for individual organizations to present on their own work and for partnership-wide trainings on using the media, grassroots fundraising, about demographic issues concerning immigrants in the valley, or on topics of concern to individual or clusters of partnering organizations. Some of these

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<sup>85</sup> Information gathered from recent interviews with select IPC partners.

<sup>86</sup> California Proposition 187 (also known as the *Save Our State* initiative) was a 1994 ballot initiative designed to prohibit illegal immigrants from using social services, health care, and public education in the U.S. State of California initially passed by the voters but later overturned and thus rescinded by a federal court.

<sup>87</sup> Including an evangelical neighborhood organizing group in Fresno and an Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) Saul Alinsky styled organizing institution and their sometimes competitor, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO). The new organizations also worked with a diversity of ethnic groups including SE Asian refugees, indigenous Oaxacans, African Americans and refugees and Mexican migrant farmworkers.



shared issues, mainly the 245(i) campaign and a 2000 census project on reaching traditionally under-counted populations, generated successful collaborative organizing. The partners also used the quarterly meeting time to design and manage collaborative projects including a re-granting program, a leadership fellowship program, and a cultural exchange festival.

While these collaborative projects were valuable in many ways, they were also the most problematic. Many believed that while these efforts were important, they re-organized program staff and took time away from developing a common agenda across the partnership. The investment in projects was also frustrating for staff who then were required to shift direction again when the foundation defunded the partnership and individual organizations were unable to maintain the new programs without the technical support and funding from the foundation. For example, together the IPC partners designed a re-granting program, a leadership-training program, and a cultural festival all with new funding from the Kinney Foundation. While each of these projects brought new resources to valley immigrant communities, they also heightened competition and even ignited new turf battles between partners. The following section shows how involvement in the IPC collaborative projects (the Public Engagement Project and the Cultural Festival) had a disorienting effect – how organizing through money disorganizes rather than organizes alliances across the region.

### **The Public Engagement Network and the Cultural Festival**

At the initial suggestion of the Kinney Foundation program officer, the IPC developed and implemented a small grants program for emerging immigrant groups across the Valley. A committee comprised of staff representatives from each partnering organizations developed the grant making criteria, communicated calls for proposals, and with additional Kinney Foundation funding made 228 grants to 149 small civic and community based groups. This program was first called the IPC Grants Program and later renamed, The Public Engagement Network (PEN)<sup>88</sup>. The funded projects were all local immigrant-led and included areas such as cultural heritage education, community organizing for political representation on local boards, environmental justice pesticide awareness, and youth leadership. Aside from getting resources to small emerging organizations, the goal of the granting program was to expand the IPC's organizing capacity and network down to the grassroots. The Kinney Foundation program officer explained, "The IPC partners are actually what I call the

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<sup>88</sup> In keeping with the fictionalized names throughout the chapter, these project names are not actual names but approximate the general ideas expressed.

‘grass tips’. They have been around a while and have fairly established institutions. Through PEN we can now reach the grassroots.”

Getting funding to small immigrant civic group was rewarding for all of the partners. However, the act of organizing a network around grants proved to have unanticipated consequences. One partner explained to me how a hierarchical dynamic between IPC partners and PEN grantees was established through the granting program,

We used to do this thing where we’d bring the (PEN) grantees to our partnership meetings to hear about what they had achieved at the end of the grant cycle. One time it was a total disaster. One of the (IPC) partners, or I’m not sure who, but there was one big circle of chairs around the perimeter of the room for (IPC) partners, and another circle of chairs inside of it. They had to sit there with us watching from the outside, talking amongst ourselves. It was like to them we were this judging authority looking in at them like they were on display, ‘Oh, look at this cute little group from Kern or Madera.’ And then some (IPC) partners would talk amongst themselves and not listen when they were presenting. It was awful.

Through PEN, IPC partners got a taste for becoming philanthropists. Because they invited new immigrant leaders, youth, and budding civic organizations to the partnership as recipients of IPC funding with set reporting and evaluation requirements, a hierarchy based on a monetary relationship was immediately established. The IPC network of 21 organizations had indeed expanded to almost 150 new grassroots immigrant organizations, with incredible potential to organize if the right moment or shared cause emerged. However, even when attacks against immigrants deepened as the Patriot Act was passed after 9/11 and the ICE raids chased already isolated immigrant communities into the darkness of constant fear, the IPC/PEN network was unable to mobilize. As the main organizing tool, money determined how the organizations would relate to one another. Instead of building alliances the PEN grantees became competitive with one another for IPC funding, IPC partners became mini-philanthropists, and instead of uniting to organize partners continued to compete with one another and with PEN groups for the attention of California foundations.

Another aspect of the PEN that unintentionally reinforced monetary over strategic organizing alliances was the technical assistance component of the program. As a part of receiving grants the PEN recipients were required to attend technical assistance and networking gatherings hosted by one of the IPC organizations. This IPC organization, Valley Immigrant Center (VIC) received funding and consultants from The Kinney

Foundation to organize and facilitate the required PEN retreats. The director of this organization, Maria Suarez, initially saw this as a great opportunity to reach out to new groups across the Valley and to help strengthen the IPC network and the work of her own organization. However, she discovered early on that the very nature of ‘training grantees’ was set up to fail. Reflecting on the inherent divisive nature of philanthropic relationships, Suarez described one of the main consequences of organizing around money,

We were responsible for bringing all of these grantees together and that made a 40+ person workshop when we know that 20 is about the most that makes for a good learning environment . . . these gatherings were mandatory in the foundation contracts which meant that people had to come for the money not because they wanted to. For most it was thought of as just another ‘required meeting.’ It was hard to get many of the grantees away from this attitude of just coming for the money . . . The main problem was that people now think of us (VIC) as (The Kinney Foundation), always asking us for money and resources and have a certain kind of expectation from us that makes it difficult for us to do the kind of work we want to do. People want to know what we can do for them, not what we could do together.

In this kind of scenario both the organization hired to facilitate the re-granting process and the ‘grantees’ move from an organizing or educational relationship to a grantor/grantee relationship. Organizations also risk becoming competitive and protective of their work as they seek approval and future grants from the foundation, as monitored through VIC and the Foundation. I observed that the IPC partner representatives who sat on the PEN committee were well aware of these challenges and constantly asked themselves, “How can we stop calling PEN member ‘grantees.’ Even if we don’t say it to them in person, we are still thinking of them as grantees. We need to find a new way of thinking about this.” With money as the primary organizing tool for the IPC and PEN it would take a lot of work for partners to get outside of the philanthropic framework.

One attempt to bring immigrant groups together across the IPC-PEN network and beyond was the IPC’s Cultural Festival. In the wake of 9/11 anti-immigrant sentiments raged in many parts of the country. California’s Central Valley was no exception. At one PEN gathering, in late 2001, conversation converged around the idea that in the current political climate, with increased violent attacks and home raids, immigrants were ‘hiding out’ and afraid to express their concerns or enact cultural practices in public. From this meeting the idea emerged to found an annual festival where immigrant communities took the public stage, performed their native dances,

songs, and stories and engaged the general public in workshops around the issues of concern to their communities. The VIC, a cluster of IPC and PEN partners, and a host of Kinney Foundation consultants worked to make this idea a reality. First they convened youth, women, and organizational leaders from the Hmong, Mixteco, Mexican, Cambodian, and Pakistani communities across the Valley. Next they formed a committee and interviewed people in each community, came up with a series of themes of interest to each, and designed a multi-cultural educational three day event to bring the issues, concerns, and cultures of Central Valley immigrants to the public stage. The event drew over 3,000 Central Valley residents and generated public support for immigrant communities and new projects to address some of the issues identified.

While the Cultural Festival was an inspirational and for some transformational experience, it also could not escape the fallout of using money as a central organizing tool. The Kinney Foundation staff and consultants chose VIC as the main convener for the festival and made an initial grant of \$350,000 to make it happen. Two of the other IPC partners who had a long history of cultural arts and activism, through the Chicano and farmworker movements, resented VIC for receiving the grant and refused to organize their constituents in the North Valley. Other partners asked why they should be involved if VIC received all the funds to organize the event. And yet others directly asked VIC for money, imagining that they had a huge surplus of resources for having received money and consulting time from the foundation for organizing both the PEN gatherings and the festival.

Individual cultural presentation groups, including Mixteco and Hmong dancers, a Mexican Banda, a farmworker movement style Teatro, and a Cambodian opera, all expressed the importance of having a public stage beyond their immediate communities. The feelings of pride and acceptance, of making friends across cultural lines, of taking over a public space in Fresno for three days countered the isolation and marginalization many immigrant communities experience. Despite the profound impact of the festival, in the eyes of the IPC host organization, it also deepened the competition and monetary expectations introduced through the PEN. As VIC offered stipends to Festival presenting groups, the word got out that they had an enormous grant from the Foundation and were hand-picking cultural groups to perform. For the first time VIC was receiving numerous calls from community groups and individuals asking for stipends or protesting that another community group got more attention and money than them. As local professionals were vying for consulting contracts to do the lighting, the electrical work, and the staging of festival productions VIC found itself playing the role of a large production agency. IPC partners slowly withdrew their participation as they realized that they would not receive additional funds for being

involved. After three years of convening the festival the director of VIC found herself overwhelmed by festival organizing duties, a changed relationship with local groups vying for stipends to participate, and an organizational program increasingly distant from their original goal to educate and organize an immigrant voice and political agenda across the region.

Ironically despite the unanticipated dis-organizing and divisive fall-out of the project, the Cultural Festival, surrounded by positive publicity in foundation networks, may be VICs only hook to attract new funds to save the organization from the current financial crisis it faces alongside many other small nonprofit institutions across the country. In foundation circles the ‘multi-cultural’ and artistic expression aspects of the project gained much more attention than the original ‘immigrant rights’ and political participation goals that the project was founded on. Speaking to the interests and trends of national funding networks continues to transform the meaning and founding story of the Cultural Festival as VIC pursues future grants to keep its organization afloat. The IPC Cultural Festival and the other examples of philanthropic organization and dis-organization in this section show how the myths and vision communicated through philanthropic networks and institutional arrangements are often quite different from what we see on the ground, yet hold great influence in the directions social movement organizations take.

### **Conclusion: The Bubble Bursts and Partners Disperse**

As the high tech bubble burst, the Kinney Foundation’s endowment shrank, and 9/11 made it increasingly unpopular to fund immigrant organizing, the IPC saw the beginning of its end. Just as in 1995 when the foundation embarked on a strategic planning process to redirect funds towards collaborative initiatives, the foundation went through a similar overhaul in 2002-2003. Never completely sold on the immigrant organizing focus of the IPC, the foundation’s leadership made the IPC a primary target in its severe downsizing and reorganization plan. Just before the foundation decided to end funding to the IPC and to eventually retire (fire) program officer Sibley, Sibley predicted,

I feel like I am on the train tracks with a train coming at me at full speed, and there is nothing I can do but watch it hit me. They’ve been after me for some time now. And now with the change of fortunes at the foundation, and it being even less popular to fund immigrant groups, they have their window.

The tool that the Kinney Foundation used to end funding to the IPC and to lay-off and reorganize staff was the still popular ‘outcomes based evaluation’ model. Ultimately the relational understanding of civic participation led to the de-funding of the partnership. In the final years, the foundation board required Sibley to show quantitative measure of success, a near impossible task for such a broad, pluralistic vision of civic participation- a vision the foundation championed in the late 1990’s. In 2002 Sibley was asked to make a presentation to the foundation’s board of directors showing specific and tangible outcomes of their 5 million dollar annual investment in the partnership since 1996. Consultants were hired, partners were interviewed and Sibley came up with a power point presentation showing three primary measures of success, new immigrant volunteers, participation in public events and forums, and immigrants served in citizenship and education courses. These relational outcomes were not enough for either the Kinney Board of Directors or for progressive funders the partnership attempted to attract to take up support of the partnership. Just as the partners asked themselves in the early days, the Kinney Board and potential funders asked Sibley and the IPC ‘Civic participation for what?’”

The IPC shared the same fate as many collaborative initiatives of the 1990’s: it based its success on social relationships and not quantitative ‘measurable outcomes’ as became the standard when the business oriented approach to evaluating nonprofit funding took hold during the economic downturn of the early 2000’s. Unfortunately, because IPC partners were organized by money and not by a shared analysis of immigrant concerns and strategies they slowly disbanded when they could not retain or attract new foundation dollars. The lack of measureable outcomes, a unified identity, vision or organizing strategy among partners was observed by a potential funder and communicated in a long email:

" . . . I have to say that from my perspective there is a sense that the leadership is at the edges, i.e., within various organizational members, each pulling and pushing the (IPC) in several directions at once (which makes it seem almost like a field of tornadoes where funnels are constantly emerging and disappearing, but with no apparent center and capable of heading off in an unforeseen direction at any given moment), rather than having a clear center, like a hurricane, where there is a clear direction and concentrated energy with a clear forward momentum, which even if it turns, turns as one. I don't want to go too far with this analogy since I clearly see the (IPC) energy as creative and not destructive, but I hope you get my meaning about having a clearly visible and compelling or driving center. The second point is really the whole issue of making some tough decisions about priorities and the most important work of the

(IPC). This is a point I feel as though we have been talking about for some time now. I think that without demonstrating some real progress on both issues, the discussion about funding might be a tough one . . . ”<sup>89</sup>

The author of the email goes on to suggest that after 5 years of Kinney funding, the partners “get free” of the single foundation paradigm and that individual member organization support should not be provided through the IPC, especially without having built a “collaborative center.” After the Kinney Foundation decided to end funding to the IPC in 2002, the partners found themselves “Kinney dependent” and suffering from having spent an incredible amount of time and energy re-organizing themselves around monetary alliances and program frameworks rather than on collective organizing interests and are only now figuring out what makes strategic sense to do together. Other potential funders, who would prefer to see the partnership map out goals and strategies around yet another set of foundation initiatives through the ‘Western Foundation,’ further complicates this dynamic, as explored in Chapter Five. In a recent interview, the director of one IPC partner organization suggested that it appears as if, “all the partners want to do now is get funding from the Western Foundation. I have a feeling that now we are going to be all about health and completely drop immigrant organizing all together.”<sup>90</sup>

In this chapter I showed how the *dis*-organizing nature of foundation driven ‘collaborative initiatives’ is due in part to the disorienting nature of organizing around money, but is also largely due to the limits of working within a nonprofit organizational framework where each partner is ultimately accountable to their own boards and funders. The funder in turn is accountable to no one except for their investors and the market. In this configuration there are ultimately no constituents or ‘people’ to collectively represent or organize on behalf of across the partnership. In the absence of shared articulation of their identity, common enemy, and purpose— a central component in most social movements (Castells 1997) —it is difficult to imagine the partnership finding its “collaborative center” or set of organizing principles as the potential funder requested. Manuel Castells (1997) has argued that institutionalized cbo’s are incapable of generating real social movement or change. Similarly Piven and Cloward in their historic study *Poor People’s Movement’s* (1977) show how social movement organizations solidify into rigid bureaucracies unable to move with the concerns of the people they originally set out to represent. Others have further argued that most development or social service organizations contribute to the larger capitalist state project that foundations maintain (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999).

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<sup>89</sup> Funder representative from the National Rural Funders Collaborative.

<sup>90</sup> November 21, 2004 interview with IPC partner in Fresno, CA.

Based on my interviews and experiences working with the IPC, I observed how organizing through separate nonprofit organizations united by a funder rather than a shared identity, interests, or political commitments did in fact prevent the formation of collective strategies to address structural problems. Most IPC partners operate primarily within their own funded not-for-profit organizations, coming together across organizational lines only to Kinney sponsored collaborative meetings. At most partnership meetings I attended one or two long time farmworker organizers made desperate calls to action, accusing other partners of wasting time, money, and political alliances that if they existed back in the ‘movement days’ would have been harnessed and organized into a collective political strategy.<sup>91</sup> Questions like, ‘what are we waiting for’, ‘are you for the long haul or just the (Kinney) paycheck’, and ‘we just need a shared vision’ were not un-common. Despite the sincere interest and oftentimes dramatic calls for unified action, very little time was spend analyzing issues of common concern, understanding each others’ approaches to community organizing<sup>92</sup>, or strategizing beyond specific funded programs.

I conclude this chapter with three fundamental questions at the heart of the dilemma of re-building social movements or new organizing on behalf of the poor and marginalized through the philanthropic collaborative initiative. The first relates to the problematic of the philanthropic ‘theory of change’, the primary ‘dis-organizing’ technique described in this chapter. Can the myths and messages created in philanthropic institutions ever truly match-up with the struggles of social movement leaders and institutions? Looking back to Chapter Two, could the myth of a ‘community union’ communicated through correspondence with the Field Foundation in 1964 truly meet the visions and demands made by Cesar Chavez for a fully unionized workforce across the agricultural sector? In this case the myth broke down when the heat of the strikes and union drives scared off the private funders and the notion of a community union fell apart. Could the Kinney Foundation’s myth or story of a socially, culturally, and economically engaged immigrant population across California’s Central Valley confront an agricultural system that has bred poverty and inequality since it’s inception? The study of the IPC has shown that without including an analysis of the structural inequality that breeds inaction and isolation a pluralist vision of grassroots participation will remain a myth, obscuring and masking the real structures that perpetuate inaction and hopelessness. The reality of the funders of the

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<sup>91</sup> Of course as shown in chapters one and two, institutional conflicts and competition were not completely absent during periods of the farmworker movement.

<sup>92</sup> This was not an easy task given the diversity of approaches and constituents as described.



IPC , and most private foundations, is that they were interested in ameliorating but not solving regional poverty. While the program officer, Sibley, might have been, the President and the Board were never interested in organizing farmworkers. Sibley was only able to create an ‘opening’ for immigrant and farmworker organizing because of his skill at shaping a pluralist democratic ideology. However, in Michael Goldman’s words, “As long as we perpetuate the claims that there is no connection between increased poverty in the South and increased accumulation in the North . . . we are merely retelling imperial-modernization myths.” The same claim can be made about retelling the American myth of civic participation without making the connection between poverty amidst plenty, between low-wage undocumented immigrant labor and industrial wealth. According to a consultant for the IPC,

The (IPC) partners were not ‘shaping a message’ like (Sibley) was. Like he had to for the foundation and his board. (Sibley) was supporting these groups by building a myth on their behalf. The tensions in the collaborative partly grew out of this disconnect between the faces of the people and the myth. Ultimately this kind of tension can only break down in conflict. But this tension always exists in American philanthropy. It’s all about creating and pursuing those myths. The work on the ground becomes a patchwork fusion of needing to take support from wherever we can get it and often times we have to speak to those myths. Poverty pimping becomes easy for non-profits in this climate. (Interview with IPC Evaluation Consultant, 2008)

In the case of the Kinney Foundation, it was the populist dream or myth of immigrant civic participation that both made possible and led to the downfall of the IPC.

The second question, related to the trap of organizations speaking to ‘the myth’ of philanthropy, is whether strategic coalitions can be built from monetary driven institutional arrangements. Ultimately this study has shown that while some collaborative initiative partners come to the table with the intent to build organizing coalitions, many come just for the resources. In the end money was proved to be an ineffective and at times disruptive organizing tool. In the words of one CVP partner,

This diverse cadre of community organizations, with different intentions and no unity other than all receiving (Kinney) funding, working under

such a broad range idea, just would not work. I was always worried that it would become a well-meaning boon doggle.(Interview with CVP partner, 2007).

While many of the early consultants, partners, and program staff had a clear vision for building a long term coalition to build a movement to support immigrant rights and political participation across the Valley, not all partners were patient with this broad vision. And even if strategic action had been taken early, the foundation would have pulled out for fears that the organizers were too ‘radical’ and moving beyond their definition of civic participation. According to many people I interviewed, the foundation Board was suspicious that Sibley was simply trying to find a way to sneak in community organizing work from the start. The IPC was a large investment and it was watched closely. Under such stress during the last years of the initiative, one of Sibley’s strategies as he straddled the board and the partners, was to simply ‘throw money where the energy was,’ hoping that the additional resources would give new life to ‘authentic’ partner driven efforts. Instead of spurring new organizing, within the confines of the civic participation model, money became the means to the ends. For the IPC, partners focused so heavily on keeping the resources coming that all of their energy was spent on staying in the game. When the funding dried up and partners struggled to keep programs going, and in some cases keep their organizations from shutting down, they realized that the cost of collaboration was too high. During his very difficult last days at the foundation, Sibley noted that, “Perhaps money is a very blunt organizing tool.”

The final set of question concerns what do foundations actually ‘see’ and expect when they recruit an organization to participate in a collaborative. What is an ‘authentic’ grassroots organization? Who do immigrant or farm worker organizations actually represent? What capacity does an organization have to mobilize the constituents it claims? This chapter revealed the clear problematic of the foundation selection of collaborative partners that otherwise would not imagine working together. It is clear that the IPC never did gel around a sharp focus partially due to the outside selection of partners. However, despite all of the problems introduced through foundation funding structures and the institutional arrangements required through collaborative initiatives, a question very few partners interviewed wanted to address is what the ‘grassroots’ or ‘movement’ organizations were actually doing with or without foundation funding. One partner revealed,

I think the program officer confused immigrant organizations with immigrants. He was dealing with organizations that don’t

always listen to their constituents and are often competitive with one another over who they are representing and who is getting the most funding and recognition. Oftentimes they don't represent anyone and funders think they do. (One organization) that is built up as *the* group that organizes indigenous Mexicans only represents a small slice of Oaxacans for example. And some organizations are made up of two to three people. (Interview with IPC partner, 2008)

Similar to various social movements that emerged in the 1960's (Morgan 2003), the growth, professionalization, bureaucratization, and distancing from constituents (often in relationship with public and private funding requirements) of historic social movement organization has severely changed the organizing terrain across the Central Valley. With so many large and historic institutions attracting the majority of grants and public attention, few emerging organizing groups are able to compete in a field of fierce competition. In the absence of a regional or national movement spirit, ethic or shared set of strategies, and in the context of established institutional boundaries, funders step into, from their perspective, an open space to propose the ways in which initiatives are designed. In a resource poor region of great need like the Central Valley, established organizational leaders are less apt to turn down foundation grants and chart new territory. At the start of the farmworker movement institutions were being built and people took advantage of mobilizing philanthropic resources and channeling into the movement, as shown in Chapters One and Two, but in non-movement times people find it difficult come together across institutional lines –lines that increasingly define organizations embattled, rebuilt, professionalized and in some cases co-opted or destroyed in the decades following the 1960's.

The model of the 'collaborative initiative' in particular provides insight into the limits and possibilities of social change within the predominant CBO/philanthropy framework in non-movement times. It helps to explain the complicated and contradictory ways in which mainstream grant making foundations, reluctant to directly address the market forces and economic relationships on which they rely, create myths and stories that reshape organizing through ideological program frameworks, monetary alliance building, and foundation selected leadership. By uncovering the places where grantees did not always 'buy into' or were able to capitalize upon philanthropic relationships and theories we also see how collaboratives can open up spaces of possibility if navigated strategically. The following chapter is a case study of an initiative designed by a single program officer who claimed to build upon the mistakes of the IPC. This project takes up much of the

recommendations of the IPC partners, including more governance, training, planning, and asset building, however unfortunately with even less success than the IPC, which at least launched two successful campaigns and several productive projects during its short lifetime.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> The IPC never completely disbanded and is currently applying for 501c3 status, with a board of directors, and very limited funds. Of the partners I interviewed, two are still involved in the limited activities of the IPC.

## Chapter Five

### Like Oil and Water: Worker-Grower Partnerships and the ‘New Win-Win Paradigm’

#### Introduction

I’m not worried about us migrants- us campesinos. We are strong people. We will survive. I’m worried about you growers who will be devastated if we (undocumented immigrant field workers) are all forced to leave. And how will you keep your farms in California when you could do better in Mexico? How can we help you win this fight? - *Farmworker activist at a philanthropic conference on farm worker health, Sacramento, California, 2008.*

With the demise of Marxism, the illusion that we can finally dispense with the notion of antagonism has become widespread. This belief is fraught with danger, since it leaves us unprepared in the face of un-recognized manifestations of antagonism.  
Chantal Mouffe 1993

The conception of successful political negotiation as a process of building consensus through the identification of common interests, rather than conflict or difference, has become almost hegemonic. President Barrack Obama brought the idea of a consensus based politics to new heights, commonly stating on the campaign trail that there are very few issues that we cannot find a solution for that most people would be happy with. A commitment to reducing teen pregnancy as a non-divisive solution to the ‘abortion issue’ was his prime example. For California farmworkers the new consensus based politics is represented in the union-grower alliance around immigration reform (primarily through the ‘AgJobs’ legislative proposal<sup>94</sup>)

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<sup>94</sup> Also discussed in previous chapters, AgJobs is The Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits

and market based efforts to keep large farms in California in the face of global competition.

This chapter asks what kind of change consensus based politics allows, and more importantly what it excludes and makes unthinkable. What does an exclusive focus on teen pregnancy leave out? Is it able to conceive of a woman's right to choose or activism against anti-abortion terrorists? And what does farmworker advocacy, that strives to make California attractive to agricultural industry, leave out? In my research, I found that today many farmworker organizers and advocates believe that in the current climate of global financial crisis and competition, and the increasingly threatened status of undocumented workers, consensus based partnerships with growers is the only thinkable strategy for improving the lives of farmworkers.

In this chapter I interrogate the 'Win-Win' consensus model in the context of a large-scale foundation initiative in farmworker communities in the San Joaquin Valley, The Western Foundation's Farm Worker Community Building Initiative (FWCBI or CBI).<sup>95</sup> Through extensive interviews and observation of this initiative between 2007 and 2008, I observed how a consensus building approach excluded strategies to address deeply embedded migrant poverty and the long standing pesticide, housing, sexual harassment, and other work place abuses commonly experienced by California farmworkers today. These foundation-led strategies coincided with the new grower friendly rhetoric of farmworker movement<sup>96</sup> leaders as they sought allies in their campaign for the AgJobs legislation. For the first time in history the movement rhetoric (at least) is about saving California agriculture from the dangers of global competition and the need to insure a sustainable workforce through new guestworker programs with pathways to citizenship. This is a completely different message from the early movement efforts to end the U.S.-Mexico 'Bracero' guest worker program which was

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and Security Act ("AgJOBS") that was designed through an unprecedented compromise between farmworker advocates (primarily United Farm Workers) and major agricultural employers to address labor supply concerns as related to the current immigration crisis. If passed AgJOBS would ensure a legal, stable labor supply and would create pathways to legalization. It also contains a proposal to create a new 'guestworker' program.

<sup>95</sup> All foundation, initiative, and individual names are disguised according to the Human Subjects Protocols for this project. All subsequent individual and organizational names in this chapter are disguised to protect the identity of informants.

<sup>96</sup> Despite the common conception that the 'Farm Worker Movement' occurred only in the 1960's and early 1970's, members of the UFW and ally organizations consider their current work as a part of the long term 'movement.'

then considered the biggest barrier to organizing farmworkers. The current plea for workers advocates to join efforts in ‘saving industry’ is a far cry from Cesar Chavez’ call to “*overthrow* a farm labor system in this nation that treats farm workers as if they were not important human beings.”<sup>97</sup> As part of the new worker-industry alliance, historic movement non-profit organizations, such as the Farm Worker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD)<sup>98</sup>, are working with growers to improve production strategies and increase industrial efficiency, thereby increasing profit and competitiveness of farmers while also increasing the output (and therefore theoretically the wages) and sustainability of workers. Since the cost of doing business is more expensive (e.g. land, water, equipment, labor, and regulation costs) in California than in the global south, this approach sees the human worker as the only malleable input to increase competitiveness. So instead of ‘fighting’ for workers’ rights and enforcing existing regulations, former farmworker advocates are looking for ways to make workers produce more for growers. Theoretically there is a ‘win-win’ in this approach, increasing farm profit and worker wages at once.

During the time of my research, this ‘Win-Win’ approach was celebrated and resourced through foundations interested in engaging with ‘movement’ organizations that are no longer concerned with ‘problems’ and ‘confrontation.’ Through an investigation of one such foundation initiative, The Farm Worker Community Building Initiative (CBI) this chapter illustrates how a \$10 million consensus based project creates institutional governing structures that prohibit organizations from addressing the long standing unfair labor practices that have kept farmworkers living in unhealthful and unjust conditions for decades. I argue that the idea of consensus based collaboration, particularly the ‘asset based’ approach, the overwhelming concern with collaborative processes and structures, and the need for ‘all stake-holder’ concerns to be heard, confines and frustrates grassroots organizations already challenged by the pessimistic political climate and decades of institutional competition and restrictions. Ultimately, the ‘win-win’ approach facilitates processes that identify the places where

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<sup>97</sup> Public address by Cesar Chavez, President, United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, November 9, 1984--San Francisco.

<sup>98</sup> My interviews with FIELD staff and observations at FIELD meetings were included in the 10 interview subjects approved as ‘public leaders’ in the Human Subjects protocols for this project, and are therefore named.

growers and workers can work together, avoiding and making unthinkable topics where growers' economic interests may be challenged.

Hidden in the consensus approach lie market-based strategies to increase the profit of industry. Some projects do propose incentives to become more environmentally friendly and some propose ways to increase worker productivity. None take on issue of regulation or holding industry accountable for continued abuses and failure to implement the health and safety legislation passed under the leadership of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Obviously, none of them address worker ownership, cooperatives, or banning the corrupt labor contractor system and below minimum wage undocumented immigrant workforce that makes farm labor organizing increasingly difficult.<sup>99</sup> While inconceivable now, models of collective worker ownership, land reform, and business accountability were imaginable only a few decades ago. By calling 'Win-Win' projects consensus-oriented disguises the limited stakeholders at the table that these programs benefit and exclude the problems experienced by the most vulnerable workers, the non-unionized recent immigrant field hands. In this respect, it makes more sense to call these projects market-investment initiatives that improve conditions for running a farm in California (an important cause to many concerned with the shrinking farm land in the state) where workers may sometimes benefit- such as in the now probable passage of AgJobs and a new guestworker program that would guarantee farm jobs to migrants traveling across Mexico's northern border. The AgJobs grower-worker partnership is no small feat as legal status, even as a temporary guest worker, is an enormously important issue for many migrants living in fear of imminent deportation and separation from their American born families. But what does an exclusive focus on immigration reform, on terms acceptable to growers, leave out? Ultimately the proposals play to the needs of industry and the desperation of migrants seeking work and temporary legal residency, without addressing the worsening conditions in agricultural communities and the continuing abuses against migrant fieldworkers.

Beyond farmworker communities, it is important to investigate consensus-based politics where advocacy and action had previously existed. Inspired by the business guru's of the 1980's and 1990's, including Peter Senge, Patricia Wheatly and Dee Hock, 'Win-Win' became an overwhelmingly

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<sup>99</sup> The structural changes to the farm labor system throughout the 1980's and 1990's was covered in chapters 3 and 4 and will not be repeated in this chapter.



popular approach to planning and policy development in many contexts including environmental sustainability, corporate responsibility, and the general approach of President Barrack Obama's administration. This moment of consensus politics represents a move away from addressing industrial abuses and towards saving industry itself and is made possible by the fear among workers and owners alike of losing livelihoods in a financially insecure time. While 'saving jobs' or 'saving industry' take center stage, what is left out of the public agenda? What is not conceivable to accomplish or even attempt to change through the process of consensus based collaboration?

In this chapter I argue that while the tools used in the win-win model, including community asset mapping, may be promising in many areas, the downsides are huge. Beyond the specific limitations to confronting or changing the agricultural industry, the consensus approach, when used among participants with such divergent power, denies a very central element of politics and social change itself – conflict and the identification of difference. Part of the great success of the farmworker movement during the 1960's was its ability to dramatize the stark differences in life experience, in privilege and power between the farmworker (*la campesina/campesino*) and the grower (*el mayordomo*) to farm working families who had no public voice or sense of power in their own position or understanding of the world. Through their stark and simplified plays of *campesino vs. grower*, of *friend vs. enemy*, good vs. evil *El Teatro Campesino*, a roving theater troupe that toured the fields and picket lines, showed workers that every identity is relational and that the conditions and the very existence and suffering of the *campesino* was determined by its opposition to the wealthy grower, his 'constitutive outside' (Butler 1990). These theatrical presentations aired on *Radio Campesino* and were documented in the pages of *El Malcreado* ('the mischievous', or those who speak back to their parents, named after the paper of the Mexican Revolution), the movement's paper. Despite the complexity and diversity within the farmworker population these relational representations of 'us' and 'them' prompted anger, action, and a sense of collective struggle –the seeds of a movement.

When funders, movement leaders, and advocacy institutions speak only of allies and common interests, what is then hidden and forbidden from knowing? If there is no 'we' and 'them' what are the terms by which to think about or speak about social change? While important common interests do emerge, such as the need for reformed immigration policy, without an

analysis of inequity or struggle to change the power dynamics therein the more powerful political actors will win in the end. Everyone will get continued agricultural production and jobs in California -this is the clear win-win and many argue is the only politically viable solution in this moment. However, a perspective that necessitates agreement with and serving the interests of growers renders significant change to a system that perpetuates poverty and marginalization impossible. After a consensus based immigration reform bill, still only a few will have political power, human rights, healthy living conditions, fair wages, and children who believe that the world is full of opportunities. Thousands of California farmworkers will still sleep under the trees and in the drainage ditches of the fields they work in the hot sun of daylight.

In agreement with Chantal Mouffe in her series of essays *The Return of the Political* (1993) I argue that conflict and antagonism free politics is the biggest threat to democracy. Alongside development scholars Michael Goldman (2008) and James Ferguson (1994) I show how the ‘anti-politics machine’ of development and philanthropy often do not solve the problems they set out to address. Instead they hide adversaries and enemies – leaving the perspective, histories and abuses of the marginalized ‘other’ untouched. This chapter interrogates this current moment of ‘consensus’ based organizing by looking at three specific ways in which antagonisms are diffused and new ways of working are developed through the Western Foundation’s CBI. The first is through the process of research and the diluting role of the appointed ‘Task Force’ in translating research into policy recommendations. The second technique explored is the ‘asset-based’ community development model. The third section explores a ‘Win-Win’ collaborative model inspired by business theory and promoted through foundation prescribed partnerships.

### **From ‘*Laboring in the Shadows*’ to the ‘*California’s Bread Basket*’: Research and The Consensus Task Force**

In 1996 The Western Foundation (TWF) was founded as a result of a nonprofit health institution conversion into a for-profit corporation. According to state law this transfer required the converted corporation to donate a large amount of assets to charity. It was first agreed upon that through the conversion process half a million dollars would be spent on public causes. When consumer advocates found out about the small

amount of funds dedicated to charity they claimed that the transfer was selling taxpayers short and successfully lobbied for an increase in the amount to three billion dollars– in the form of new charities including the TWF. Once incorporated the payout rate was extremely rapid because consumers felt they were already cheated out of charitable distributions for the three years during the negotiations with the State. As a result, the new foundations were required to distribute 300 million dollars over a 3-year period. According to a program officer at TWF, the transfer was a “rushed fiasco” and the foundation “was required to ramp up and distribute resources with little to no research” (Interview with TWF Program Officer in 2008).

When made aware of the enormous and sudden spend-out requirements of newly founded TWF, several long time farmworker advocates with experience and connections in philanthropic networks (some members of the Immigrant Participation Collaborative featured in Chapter Four) lobbied TWF program officers to make an explicit commitment to farmworker communities across California. Just as the IPC was born from a suddenly expanded endowment at The Steward Kinney Foundation, the TWF’s farmworker programs were born out of the enormous windfall created by the healthcare conversion process. In this section, I show how the TWF’s original commitment to addressing farmworker poverty through an unprecedented scientific study on farmworker health and living conditions was watered down and de-politicized through the consensus processes of a foundation-led task force.

In 1998 a team of agricultural researchers associated with the California Studies Center (CSC) were working on the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS, a national database of agricultural worker demographics) and approached TWF to see if they might be interested in funding CSC to create a California-based and more ethnographically driven agricultural worker research project. In partnership with TWF, CSC conducted extensive research and in 2000 published *Laboring in the Shadows: Enduring Farm Worker Poverty*<sup>100</sup> (2000), which documented the extremely poor health and living conditions of California farmworkers. This report attracted wide support and, alongside a popular low-income migrant housing program of the foundation, was the impetus for TWF to continue with farmworker programs.

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<sup>100</sup> All report titles are disguised to protect the identity of research subjects who were guaranteed anonymity as per the Human Subjects Protocols of this project. Passages cited from reports are re-phrased, retaining all original meaning, to protect the authors.

In describing the founding goals and vision of what became a \$50 million dollar investment in farmworker communities across California, program officer Felipe Cordero explained that *Laboring in the Shadows* was the founding document of TWF's farmworker investments, "I have everyone we are going to fund, all of the partners and consultants, read this report in order to understand the real lineage of this work." (Interview with Felipe Cordero, 2007). Included in this report was a rousing call to action from TWF President,

"We pay tribute to those who have struggled to bring dignity and rights to the lives of California's farm workers as we present this report, *Laboring in the Shadows* . . . . in this report we ask all Californians to look deeply at the often hidden lives of the more than 1 million migrant agricultural workers of California . . . as a result of their low wage work and undocumented status, farm workers face more barriers than any other group of workers in America . . . they continue to labor in our fields –often silent in the shadows, but ever present. The contradiction is unavoidable; that their labor provides our nation and the world with a bounty of food, yet still they suffer in ways most Americans would never tolerate . . . let us use the opportunities and resources at hand to tackle the agricultural poverty that has plagued Americans for the last century."

This strong and moving introduction is followed by a preface stating the main structural barriers to improving farmworker health and living conditions, including:

- Agricultural exemption from Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that requires employers to compensate for overtime beyond the 40-hour week. This exception is a product of the family farm model where family members work long hours on their own ranch, despite the fact that today only 15% of farm laborers are family members of the farmer.
- Agriculture is the only industry with 12 as the minimum work age, other industries set the minimum age at 14.
- Agriculture is the only industry when immigrants who entered the United States without authorization were immediately eligible for

- regularization of their immigration status through the 1986 IRCA legislation, guaranteeing a low-wage immigrant workforce.
- Unlike other industries, and partially due to the migratory and undocumented nature of the farmworker population, there is relatively little documented about this population in government reports.

The main findings of the report include:

- One in five male subjects had at least two of three risk factors for chronic disease
- A large majority of research subjects show a significantly greater rate of suffering from iron deficiency anemia than U.S. adults – mostly due to serious food insecurity and hunger
- Nearly 70% of all subjects lacked health insurance
- 18.5% reported having a workplace injury
- 41% reported pain that lasted for at least one week in one or more body parts
- The six most commonly reported health concerns include dental problems, back pain, itchy eyes, knee pain, feet pain, and hand pain
- The three most common mental health concerns were agitation or irritability, frustration or anger and depression. Many discussed financial, physical and psychological abuse in the fields.
- When asked about workplace health 23% of subjects complained of itchy eyes and 15% of headaches. In one research location 60% of the subjects said that they were required to ‘test the produce’ by eating unwashed grapes during harvest to determine if they were sweet enough to harvest.
- Only 7% enrolled in any government program that serves low-income people and one in six say their employers offer any form of health insurance.

Using these serious, and to some startling, findings TWF program officer Felipe Cardero embarked on a campaign to educate his board of directors and secure funds to design a large-scale farmworker initiative. Like John Sibley of the IPC, he also designed board member trips to farmworker communities to convince them of both the need and the potential in farmworker organizations. According to Cordero,

We took interested board members to the Valley, many whom had never been beyond LA or the Bay Area in California, to

become familiar first hand with what we were doing in the Valley and how real the need was. They were taken to Tall Trees to see the environmental damage first hand, the absentee landlord system, and the horrible living conditions. Then afterwards they were brought to Cutler-Orosi to see a model housing development. Then CSC presented the research findings from *Laboring in the Shadows*. This was enough to get the board to direct 50 million to address the health of farmworkers. (Interview with Felipe Cordero, 2007)

By 2001 Cordero was responsible for “cutting up the 50 million” into a statewide farmworker program. So that is just what he did. However, instead of immediately investing in organizations that attempt to address the serious health and living and work conditions revealed in *Laboring in the Shadows* the foundation convened a multi-stake-holder task force to determine how to move forward. With the assistance of a professional facilitator associated with a large public affairs and communications agency, a planning team, and host of technical advisors, the task force’s 22 members discussed the findings of *Laboring in the Shadows* with the goal of building multi-sector consensus on program and policy recommendations for the foundation. The members included academics, health care professionals, growers, elected officials, and farmworker advocates. In the final report on the work of the Task Force, *Farm Worker Health and the Bounty of Food*, the chair, a retired congressman, opens with a public letter to the President of TWF. In his letter the chair states that, “The most surprising finding was that we could actually reach consensus in such a short time frame and on such difficult issues.” So what did growers, worker advocates, health care providers, and public officials all agree upon? According to the Task Force report, “Everyone agreed fully on two issues: first the Task Force agreed that there is a general shortage of culturally competent health care professionals in agricultural areas. Secondly, it was agreed upon that the general health infrastructure, particularly the lack of comprehensive medical facilities, is weak in rural agricultural areas.” The specific agreed upon program and policy recommendations for TWF to fund and promote were:

- Increase the amount and the capacity of farmworker serving, culturally competent health care providers.
- Increasing access to medical care where farmworkers live
- Fund health education and prevention

- Analyze existing insurance coverage plans with the goal of increasing the participation of farmworker families.
- Identify governmental funding to increase farmworker access to public programs
- Find a process for reserving social security contributions of workers for health insurance programs
- Create bi-national relationships with US/Mexico to address health education
- Establish a state Farm Worker Health Commission
- Increase quality, availability, and access to farmworker housing
- Create policies to improve health and safety laws in agriculture
- Develop policy to target employers who regularly violate occupational health and safety laws.
- Develop a program to evaluate and monitor health and safety policies

While final consensus was reached on the above recommendations the report discusses how the perspectives of members of the Task Force could be broken down into three conflicting groups: 1. Growers and health care providers who believe that the main problems are the laws that make it difficult to add new insurance providers into the market, 2. Elected and public officials who believe that the main problem is the lack of health information among migrant workers, and 3. Academics and Advocates who believe that the main problem is that worker protection laws are not being enforced or improved upon.

At first glance, it appears as if the Task Force succeeded in integrating these three different perspectives into the formal program and policy recommendations, as listed above. Growers even agreed to form new policies to target ‘bad actors’ that do not enforce existing labor protection laws. However, if we return to the original findings of *Laboring in the Shadows* it becomes clear that through the consensus building process the issues that required changing the way the agricultural system operates were avoided, watered down, or disguised.

Take a look at a couple of *Suffering in Silence* findings that fell between the cracks of the consensus building process:

A large majority of all research subjects show a significantly greater rate of suffering from iron deficiency anemia than U.S. adults – mostly due to serious food insecurity and hunger.

Nowhere in the Task Force recommendations was a call to address the “insufficient diet” and the extreme food insecurity risk in farmworker communities<sup>101</sup>. While mentioned in the introduction of *Laboring in the Shadows*, there was no mention in the Task Force report of the uncompensated overtime hours farmworkers need to work in order to feed their families, or the growing amount of undocumented workers who are oftentimes paid well below minimum wage and many months out of the year cannot afford to meet their families’ dietary needs. Another *Laboring in the Shadows* finding not addressed by the Task Force,

When asked about workplace health 23% of subjects complained of itchy eyes and 15% of headaches. In one location 60% of the subjects said that they were required to ‘test the fruit’ by eating unwashed grapes during harvest to determine if they were sweet enough to harvest.

The Task Force included many policy recommendations to increase access to health care and to insurance coverage but never mentioned the continuing use of pesticide spraying and ground pumping where farmworkers work. There was also no mention of unacceptable “fruit testing” practices that growers use that put workers at extreme risk. The structure of the workday, breaks, and the causes of chronic back, knee, foot, and hand pain were also not mentioned. Yet another major finding that did not make its way from finding to policy recommendation,

The three most common mental health concerns were agitation or irritability, frustration or anger and depression.

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<sup>101</sup> “Poverty is a key predictor of food insecurity (Nord and Andrews 2003). Agricultural workers are among the poorest of all California residents, with three in five households living below the poverty level and average annual incomes of \$7,500 for individuals and \$10,000 for families (Mehta et al. 2000). High rates of food insecurity in Fresno County may therefore be associated with the fact that Fresno County has the highest concentration of agricultural workers in California, with an estimated 260,000 farmworkers and family members (Larsen 2000) - *Project Narrative: Assessing Food Security Among Agricultural Workers in California’s Central Valley (Funded by the California Nutrition Network, October 2004)*



The dramatic mental health problems, that often emerge as a result of abuse and manipulation of workers in the fields, described in *Laboring in Silence* did not show up anywhere in the pages of the Task Force report. While it is known that fieldwork itself is by nature very difficult and stressing work, how could such frequent references to agitation, anger, and depression as a partial result of continuing abuse in the fields be ignored completely? All of the policy recommendations of the Task Force, excluding the final recommendation to ‘develop policies and programs’ to improve (not to directly enforce or control) worker safety regulations<sup>102</sup>, required action and change by health care providers (more services), the state (providing more housing, insurance and programs), local municipalities (change codes to improve infrastructure in farmworker communities) and by farmworkers themselves (health education). None of the recommendations required direct action or change for growers. While all of the recommendations are important and if implemented would improve conditions for many workers and families, none of them address the structure of the farm labor system that continues to use poisonous pesticide techniques, illegal wages and working hours, and the sexual, physical, and mental harassment that many workers reported in TWF funded research. By removing any element that fuels antagonism between the various stakeholders on the committee, the consensus process avoided conflict and in doing so disguised all issues that would actually change the farm labor system. A reader knowledgeable of the history of California agriculture and efforts to improve conditions for workers may challenge my argument, saying that changing the structure of the system (one that relies on constant streams of poor and marginalized immigrant workers) is currently unthinkable. This is the precise point of this chapter- that the convergence of the current political economic climate and entrenched institutional relationships make real change unthinkable.

The process of turning stark research findings into policy recommendations (agreed upon by growers, politicians, advocates, and health care professionals) transforms an analysis of a system that breeds poverty and ‘laboring in the shadows’ into a set of discrete ‘solvable problems’ that

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<sup>102</sup> My research findings indicate that it is not just a few ‘bad actor’ farmers that break worker health, safety and wage laws but rather a majority of large growers. Farmworker advocates told me that current worker rights and safety legislation does not work because it is easier and more cost effective for growers to pay fines when caught for violating the law than it is to make the ongoing changes to the farming practice. In this regard the Task Force recommendation to target ‘bad actors’ fails to address the widespread enforcement problems.

individual actors such as health care providers and workers themselves can take on without confronting the key structural arrangements (immigration, industrialized growing, the labor contractor system, to name a few) that creates the circumstance of ‘poverty amidst plenty’ that these reports attempt to expose. The ineffectiveness, and to some insincerity, of foundation funded research is not lost on the research subjects, many of whom have witnessed years of outside research that has yet to show any returns in their communities. One research ‘subject’ that I interviewed explained,

“We have seen lots of people come in and ask us questions but we never see the funding or even the results. First we had lots of UC Berkeley students come asking about our needs. Then we had the (TWF) survey people and their researcher asking questions of us and then not providing anything. He was crying with overwhelm, I think he was surprised, about all our problems and needs but he had no power. He was just the interviewer. The mental issues we keep talking about have to do with hard work, isolation, abuse in the fields, not to mention the sexual abuse of women in the fields -the hard life of an immigrant farm worker. . .I didn’t even get a copy of the report. Thankfully I kept the researcher’s card and called him to ask for it. He told me that there was all this red tape and that he’d send it soon. Well three years later we finally saw the report, but it didn’t live up to the issues we are really facing, that we talked about. Ultimately people come and do studies but then there is no money –that we see over here anyway. They are doing that (TWF ‘Campesino Rising’) project and giving out lots for meetings and things but I’d rather see funds go directly to address what is going on in the fields and the mental health issues people are struggling with.” (Interview with Eliza Aroyo, Valley Family Resource Center, 2008)

Another farmworker advocate and service provider from Tulare County shares Aroyo’s sentiments and wonders about the founding of the 10 million dollar initiative, discussed in the following section,

“I really wonder if they are just doing another study on us. They should already know what is going on down here coming in with some new project. Didn’t they talk to people? Didn’t they read *Laboring in the Shadows* a couple years ago? After all that

research and not taking on the real issues but holding meaningless meetings instead, people are basically being bribed, with grants from TWF, to get involved.“ (Interview with Anita Jimenez, Farm Labor Center, 2008)

One farmworker advocate with a degree in agricultural economics explained to me why long time farmworker advocates have the patience to engage in a consensus building process with growers that leaves out real change to the farm labor system. She believes that due to the extreme stress California farmers find themselves in (financial insecurity, drought, risk of deportation of the undocumented workforce) the consensus issues are the only ones thinkable even to most advocates,

If we ultimately want to keep farms and farm jobs in California, it’s going to be hard to change this thing anytime soon. We are dealing with a competitive export based economy. We have the best weather and the best landscape so we are able to grow what others are not. So we have to keep up production. So you can see how it is very difficult to solve local problems around labor enforcement and costs when we are feeding a highly competitive global export-based market. Everything is born out of this system –our benefits and all our problems . . . it took forever to get growers to join AgJobs. And we agree with all the compromises except maybe *the potential abuses of a new guest worker program*. But here has been nothing more unifying for farmers and farmworkers than immigration reform. So this is what we’ve got right now. (Interview with Maria Chacon, 2008)

This moment, when confronting or ‘overthrowing’ the farm labor system as was imagined during the movement is deemed impossible, proved a perfect time for unprecedented philanthropic investments in farmworker organizing. Unable (and unwilling) to take on immigration reform policy or the structure of California-style industrial agriculture<sup>103</sup>, Felipe Cordero of The Western Foundation struggled to find ways to ‘cut-up’ the 50 million dollars to address farmworker poverty and health in ways acceptable to his board,

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<sup>103</sup> As is obvious and has been shown throughout this dissertation, private foundations created out of corporate wealth simply do not take on corporate or industrial structural arrangements. Also discussed earlier, while many foundations fund immigrant communities and education around immigration reform, they usually do not directly engage with legislative reform in this area.

growers, politicians, health care providers, and long time farmworker organizers and advocates. After four years of planning and discussion with multiple stakeholders a statewide program was launched. The following section describes the dilemma of using a consensus-based model when working with historic farmworker organizing institutions through an investigation of one of the local sites of this initiative, Campesino Rising, in Tulare County.

### **The Western Foundation's 'Campesino Rising' : An Asset Based Initiative**

#### **Shaping the Initiative: building grower-worker partnerships or reviving a social movement?**

The (TWF's Farm Worker Community Building Initiative and Campesino Rising) in Tulare County is a huge investment in the Valley right now. The program officer is a risk taker in that he wants to support farmworker organizing but the effort is currently being designed to demonstrate success for the foundation and does not want to look too close into the faces of the people. They are nervous about how farm workers will feel about the program because there will be no rapid results. Right now they are trying to restate the whole approach from community organizing to 'building capital' in farm worker communities to ensure future health in the long term . . . So he (program officer) is designing a model and broad coalition to build social capital. Part of this is because he is trying to please everyone – his dance between the foundation board and staff, the cbo's, the growers, the hired consultants, the health service agencies. I'm afraid that us consultants and evaluators are complicit in creating this myth that the foundation is really addressing the issues. I'm afraid that in the negotiation between all these groups we are like the sound and the fury signifying nothing. (Interview with Evaluation Consultant to the TWF, FWCBI, 2007).

I began observing the FWCBI Tulare Country Campesino Rising (CR) project in the spring of 2007, after a brutal winter freeze that caused serious loss of crops and weeks of pay for field workers. Many families struggled to keep their housing and pay for food. It was also one year after the historic

immigrant mobilizations across the United States where immigrants and advocates rallied against the anti-immigrant ‘Sensenbrenner Bill,’ or H.R. 4437, which proposed to raise penalties and increase felony classifications for immigrants who entered the United States illegally. Shortly after these mobilizations Immigrant Control and Enforcement (ICE, the reorganized INS under the post 9/11 Patriot Act) increased raids on undocumented immigrants’ homes, intensifying the sense of fear and marginalization among immigrant workers across California. One Central Valley farm worker advocate described the situation in Tulare Country, home to the largest migrant farm worker population in the state of California,

Things are really bad right now. In Tulare County people have created a secret underground hiding place that I’ve seen but was sworn to keep to myself. It’s like a bomb shelter and there are appointed spotters and siren systems for people fearful of raids . . . the freeze has made things even harder because people have not worked much and can’t feed their children. And the freeze crisis is turning into a drought crisis. They are afraid to go get help, for aid, or go to clinics. Everybody is hiding out.  
(Interview with Sophia Guerrero, Director of a farm worker service and education organization, Tulare County)

In 2005, before the ICE raids and before the freeze and subsequent drought years Tulare Country was picked as a site for the Campesino Rising (CR) project because of its huge farm worker population and entrenched poverty in migrant communities. It is estimated that at least 57,000 farmworkers live in the county but this number could be even greater since the agricultural base is spread out across the county and many workers are undocumented.<sup>104</sup> Farm worker families live in the many unincorporated towns scattered between farms that often lack infrastructure such as healthy water, housing, and social services. With the largest agricultural production value of any single county in the United States, Tulare County also is also one of the worst places to live and work in terms of pesticide ground pumping, spraying and drift. The farms in this region grow predominantly high pesticide use crops such as citrus fruit and grapes. Between 1991 and 1995 Tulare Country had the fourth highest incidence (first and second were neighboring counties Kern and Fresno and third was Monterey County on the coast) of pesticide poisoning with 399 reported incidents (California

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<sup>104</sup> US Migrant Enumeration Profile Project

Department of Pesticide Regulation, 1999). These numbers do not include the daily headaches, weepy eyes, nosebleeds, and skin rashes that farm workers in citrus and grapes commonly experience. In addition to pesticide poisoning Tulare Country farm workers report additional concerns in the fields including: poor sanitation and safety, mistreatment by farm contractors and field managers including financial exploitation, physical abuse, psychological manipulation, illegal charges and bribes around transportation, housing, food and drink, and farm equipment. Unfair dismissal, intimidation, and age, ethnicity, and gender discrimination are also commonly reported.<sup>105</sup>

Despite the number of critical issues that CR could have addressed, the project quickly became bogged down in community planning and consensus building processes that frustrated partners and prevented collective strategy and action from taking shape. According to several granted partners interviewed there was no CR involvement in the immigrant rights organizing of 2006 or 2007 or in ‘challenging anything that would improve conditions for farm workers’. So what was the CR project and its partnering organizations doing from late 2005 when the Tulare Country site was launched to 2008 when I finished conducted fieldwork? According to the paid staff, most of their time was spent, “with a lot of pressure to implement the asset model.”

From its inception the 50 million dollar FWCBI was fraught with the dilemma of funding issue-oriented organizers to participate in a complex multi-layered asset and consensus building process. After the Task Force translated the *Laboring in the Shadows* findings into recommendations and the TWF board of directors approved the \$50 million for a statewide project, the responsible program officer, Cordero, began to build relationships and conduct research to inform the design of the initiative. As Cordero became inspired by historic movement organizers, interested growers, and exemplary service providers he met along the way, he envisioned multiple and in some instances conflicting approaches to addressing farm worker poverty. In an interview he initially told me that, “Since the UFW days we have not seen any change in conditions or any comparable organizing. So we really want to ramp up what people organizing farm workers are doing – to revitalize a social movement.” However, instead of laying out social

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<sup>105</sup> *In Their Own Words: Farmworker Access to Health Care in Four California Regions*. California Institute for Rural Studies, May 2004.

movement or community organizing strategies (such as problem analysis, issue oriented protest, systemic critiques, activism, strategic alliance building towards specific targets, legislative change, tactics discussed in Chapter Two) Cordero proposed ways to build consensus among advocates, growers, and service providers. His idea was to, “tap into the recognition among agricultural business leaders that workers are their most precious resource and it would therefore be in their best interest to take better care of them.” (Interview with Felipe Cordero, 2007). This approach is described as an ‘asset-based’ model that strives to help both growers and workers change the way they view farm worker communities; the worker gaining dignity and pride in the work, and the grower investing more in the health, safety, and future opportunities for farm workers and their families. To do this Cordero proposed that, “We need to mobilize all stakeholders and resources to make a unified statement about the importance of and dignity in farm work, like AgJobs but at the local level.”

While building pride and dignity in field work was one of the main goals and approaches of the farmworker movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s so was community organizing, strikes, media advocacy, political marches and pilgrimages, and international boycotts in protest *against* the long standing abuses of workers and *for* the right to unionize, fair wages and working conditions. While the CR rhetoric included a revitalization of the social movement funded organizations were asked to only focus on the community ‘assets’ or strengths and were, for the first three years of funding, prohibited from strategizing around or acting on any individual or collective complaint, concern, or specific issue that emerged in partnership meetings. Many of the partners of the \$10 million Tulare County Campesino Rising project of the Farm Worker Community Building Initiative were issue-based and action oriented institutions that found this approach incredibly confusing, diffuse and frustrating. The remainder of this section explains the history, vision and design of the FWCBI’s Campesino Rising project in Tulare County. The following sections discuss how issue based organizers and a consensus asset-based model clashed and revealed the dilemmas of the antagonism free politics proposed by the project.

The first grants made to the FWCBI went to organizations that the program officer identified as ‘the champions’ including non profit organizations associated with the United Farm Workers of America, historic legal aid agencies, and a Spanish language radio station. These grants were open ended, intended to get the historic farm worker institutions on board with the

initiative and to enable them to increase their work to improving conditions for farm workers. Cordero recalls, “We made 3 year grants of \$600,000 each to several of these agencies during the start-up period.” Some believed that, “Felipe wanted to make grants for political reasons, to get in with the UFW and allowed them to submit skeletal applications that said nothing at all and if you look at the actual investments most of it is going to their work on immigration issues. This is really bad but Felipe just lets them do whatever they want and had his assistant write up the content and contract with goals and objectives each.” (Interview with evaluation consultant to the FWCB 2008). In essence, Cordero agreed that these grants were generally made to show the foundations’ support for the historic farm worker movement and to allow them to ‘ramp up what they are already doing’ to build worker-industry partnerships.

One year after ‘funding the champions’ two demo sites were announced. Cordero recalls that after announcing the ‘champion’ awards and the selection of the Tulare Country demo site, “the service provider people swarmed like flies to honey –all the nonprofits would swarm. But there were no campesinos there. It was a mistake for us to start talking so early. The cat was out of the bag. We had to start making a statement loud and clear that this project was not going to be about services but about long term community building. It was important that we used the right language because we found out who fundamentally wanted to do this work.” Instead of posting an open call for proposals, Cordero spent a year networking and deciding whom to invite to participate in the Campesino Rising project, piecing the partnership together like a puzzle. I interviewed staff from all of the 19 partnering organizations and three fourths of them said that Cordero individually courted their organization. Long standing farmworker advocacy organizations that were not invited to participate suggested that, “the TWF’s new partners are selected on the basis of who has the best verbiage. It’s about language, proposals, how you argue and present it, and also connections you have, who you know.” Interviews with partners revealed that some partners were selected based on their social movement history and connections, some on their skill at communicating ‘community building’ theory and practice, and some on recent success in organizing or serving farm worker populations.

So what was the community building vision of the CR project? And who would be invited to join ‘the champions’ in implementing the vision? Inspired by the ‘lessons learned’ articulated in several philanthropic reports



on regional partnerships<sup>106</sup>, Cordero articulated three fundamental ‘community building’ beliefs to guide a detailed structure of a multiple stakeholder regional partnership: 1. The voice of the people (farmworkers) must be at the center, 2. The effort would be sustainable after the foundation funding was gone, and 3. The project would use the ‘Asset-Based’ model drawing on the work of Cornelia Flor Butler (2003) and Robert Putnam (2001). Both Butler and Putnam theorize that the strongest, healthiest, and most socially and economically vibrant communities are those that recognize and mobilize internal strengths and trusting relationships within the community. Drawing upon Butler’s work the five assets, or forms of community capital, to be mobilized towards improving farmworker health and living conditions were public, environmental, community, social, and economic capital. The project was guided by the belief by identifying and strengthening community assets as opposed to identifying problems or immediate issues to organize around, diverse stakeholders can develop mutual appreciation, trust, and common interests to inform collective work for lasting change. The plan for achieving these common ground partnerships to improve health and living conditions in farm worker communities was imagined in three phases: relationship building, asset mapping, and finally action planning. Multiple stakeholders, including the agricultural industry, were to be included. The project was proposed to operate on multiple levels through multiple institutional structures as mapped out here:

1. **The Western Foundation and Supporting Consultants and Staff** would envision, guide, and support the overall project.
2. **The Champions, also called ‘Strategic Partners’** were to provide technical assistance and support to other partnering organizations.
3. **The Convening Partner** received a large grant to staff, convene, and manage the entire initiative. The convening partner hired a director and coordinators. This organization is a local branch of a major national charity.
4. **Other Grantees** including local and regional community organizing institutions and service providers were to recruit participation and

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<sup>106</sup> Most prominently cited are the report, *Voices from the Field: Comprehensive Community Initiatives*, The Aspen Institution, and the social capital theories of Cornelia Flor Butler (2003).

- engage in the relationship building, asset mapping, and action planning.
5. **Committees-** the ‘community organizing’ funded partnering institutions are to organize local farm worker leadership into neighborhood resident groups into committees and train and nurture them as leaders.
  6. **Farm Worker Assembly-** the Assembly is a group that brings together residents from the neighborhood Committees to provide further training and strengthen their voice to eventually have the capacity to represent their community at the Council level. This level was conceived of as an after thought when planners decided that farm worker Committee members needed more training before moving ‘up’ to the Council level.
  7. **Council** –this group operates at the town level (three towns in Tulare County were selected to participate) and has farmworker representation from the Farm Worker Assembly plus members from other sectors including the schools, social services, business people, agribusiness, and health care providers. This group is tasked with mapping local assets and aligning them with strategies to address local and regional issues.
  8. **Regional Coalition-** a regional coalition would form with representatives from each local Council. This group would plan at a broader level and ideally maintain the interests and voice of farm workers.

Imagine the Regional Coalition as an umbrella, with the three Councils directly underneath the umbrella top, one Farm Worker Assembly underneath the Council structure, and several neighborhood Committees under the Assembly. By building leadership and voice of farm workers, identifying assets in farm worker communities, and eventually at a broader stakeholder level identifying issues and strategies the various project groupings were proposed to work together towards regional decision-making around population health (ex. Reduced occupational injury, improved mental health), community health (ex. Improvements in housing and social supports), and ‘systems change’ (ex. Improving worker-employer relationships, preserving employment, creating responsive public policy).

The Committees were organized and staffed by community organizing grantee institutions and paid staff of the Convening Partner facilitated the Assembly and Councils. Over \$10 million was dedicated to the Tulare County CR project and grants were made to 19 partnering organizations including ‘the champions’ and additional community based and health care organizations. According to the staff director of the project, housed with the Convening Partner organization,

The idea ultimately is that a regional body, with farmworkers, growers, service providers, policy makers, would come up with a broad and unified picture about improving farmworker health and then develop and implement action plans, or get the resources needed to make a difference. (Interview with Campesino Rising Director, 2007)

The first stumbling block in the multi-stakeholder regional consensus-building model was revealed immediately. One year into the implementation of the CR project the Convening Partner staff claimed that the farm workers involved did not have the ability to speak up in collaborative meetings alongside city officials and service providers let alone growers. While the program officer initially envisioned the collaborative city-wide Councils including farmworkers, growers and other ‘powerful’ stakeholders working together, it was quickly determined that the farmworker representatives were ‘not ready’ to voice their concerns as equals alongside the more powerful collaborative members. In response to this ‘realization’ initiative resources were allocated to leadership training for local farmworker representatives in ‘Farm Worker Assemblies’ Hence the ‘Assembly’ level of the process, as described above, was created as an after thought. By this time multi-stakeholder Councils had already formed and lacked farm worker representation because they were being ‘held back’ for training at the Assembly level. Already, the decision-making bodies lacked ‘the voice of the farm worker.’ While not articulated in these terms, the Convening Partner quickly realized that without addressing the power imbalance between workers and growers, and even workers and local officials and service providers, there is no way to build consensus in a way that recognizes the silences and unspoken conflicts and inequity experienced by the weaker party. In this instance the model of a politics without difference or conflict was immediately revealed as flawed, but instead of directly addressing the relative powerlessness of the farm worker, or the

potential role of the Community Organizer-led Committees to build farm worker power, they put them into an institutional holding pattern via the new structure of the Assembly to ‘build leadership capacity’ as the Councils formed without them. The following section shows how the asset mapping and consensus-building model continued to break down and was particularly difficult for the community organizer grantees.

### **Like Oil and Water: assets vs. organizing**

The project is big and strategic but nothing really happens. It’s like rain in the Midwest. It never reaches the ground. (Interview with a Fresno Country public official who is also a director of a CR partnering organization in Tulare County, 2008)

The plan for the CR project was well thought out and ambitious –to both revive a social movement and build regional policy making partnerships between workers, growers and service providers towards system change that improves health and conditions in farm worker communities. In this section I show how problems arose for issue and member based organizers who had little patience with an overwhelming focus on models and processes. In addition to their frustration with the slow pace of the project, the organizer institutions battled with one another for members, the Assembly struggled to retain staff and participants, the Councils remained mired in asset mapping, and growers never found a reason to join the effort. A regional coalition never formed before the funds dried up and partners moved on to other things. Ultimately without a shared purpose or identity, specific issues or defined targets to rally around, the project became all process and partners disengaged. The foundation attempted to intervene to enforce pesticide organizing to infuse energy into the project but it was too late in the game. When the funding was discontinued due to lack of ‘measurable outcomes’ at the foundation level, partners pulled out one by one as their individual grant contracts ended. I show how the consensus-based model broke down by focusing on three specific approaches promoted in the CR project. The first is the overwhelming preference given to young professionals over seasoned organizers. The second is the project’s focus on institutional membership that conflicted with existing member organizations’ strategies. Finally, I show how the focus on community assets over issues ultimately drove the program officer to re-evaluate the project in the face of criticism from both grantees and the foundation.

### *Professional 'Girls' not Seasoned Organizers*

I was surprised to see this project hire all these young girls that maybe graduated Fresno State or UOP (University of the Pacific) or something but have no experience in the community like us 'old ladies' do. They have no idea how to work with farmworkers. They go to meetings with all the fancy clothing and language but really don't know anything. (Interview with Director of a historic farm worker organization, 2007).

A simple yet fatal decision early on in the implementation of the Tulare Country CR project was to hire young recent college graduates, all women, to facilitate the regional Assembly and local Councils. From the start, the staff of granted partnering organizations did not trust or respect these young women coordinators. The coordinators in turn did not have experience working with community organizers or leaders and became incredibly frustrated and quit in rapid succession. At the direction of the foundation program officer and the person hired to manage the local project (CR Director housed with at the Convening Partner, a local branch of a national charity), the coordinators clung to the theoretical program framework of building social capital and community assets as an attempt to retain control of the process. This put them in an even weaker position with partners who already judged the project model as overly theoretical and convoluted.

The Campesino Rising staff included one director, three community coordinators to facilitate the Council in each town, and one Assembly coordinator to convene and train emerging farmworker leaders. The hiring committee was given the direction to not hire seasoned organizers because they would not be able to facilitate a consensus-based process based on assets and broad stakeholder agreement as opposed to confrontational issues. The staff was expected to be 'neutral and professional' with the educational training to understand the multi-layered project design and the skills to facilitate meetings with diverse groups of people. The four coordinators hired (3 Council coordinators, and one Assembly) were all recent college graduates from either Fresno State University of University of the Pacific in Stockton. They had bachelor degrees in Sociology, Social Welfare, and/or Public Health. Two were daughters of farm workers. They all grew up in the Central Valley. Each had worked in a social service office in an administrative capacity. None had community organizing, development, or public or political affairs experience. The four coordinators that I

interviewed in 2007-2008 were the second-round of CR coordinators; the first four had already quit due to lack of direction, problems working with partnering organizations, and/or ‘personal reasons.’ The set of coordinators I interviewed did not have a significantly better experience than the four that came before them. By the end of my research only one remained on staff with the project.

The main problem the coordinators faced was how to communicate what they perceived as a complex consensus planning model to granted organizations interested in action, and how to embody the role of the ‘neutral facilitator.’ The Western Foundation required each coordinator to attend facilitation training at a consulting agency in San Francisco, a meeting with staff at the foundation to review the model, and to a large public health agency to familiarize them with a broad and integrated concept of health. They were also required to read up on all of the partnering organizations and TWF reports including *Laboring in the Shadows*. From this training and research the coordinators were expected to perform as neutral facilitators responsible for bringing the partnership to life through the various institutional structures and phases described in the previous section. Armed with the language of the theoretical program design and professional training from consulting and public health agencies, the coordinators immediately discovered that they were not prepared for working with the network of partnering organizations, many of which had long standing turf battles and competition between one another.<sup>107</sup> One coordinator explains her experience this way,

It’s a great idea but not an easy one to implement. I’m having to learn a whole new language and trying to learn to live the model . We have to learn to speak in a certain way, how we speak is a big part of it . . . Since we are supposed to empower them to do things for themselves now nothing can ever be ‘mine’. I accidentally say ‘my meeting’ and have to correct myself and say ‘their meeting’. We must also remember to use general terms about improving the community but not specific – not addressing issues or leading – we have to stay vague but that is sometimes confusing . . . This is hard because some people are really frustrated with the model.

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<sup>107</sup> Some of these organizations were founded during the farm worker movement of the 1960’s and some were partners in the IPC described in Chapter Four.

Another coordinator explains,

I was sent away for a week to get trained. I had to review the model and I had a lot of questions but now I get it. Its asset based not action based. We were told not to say “I” or “my”. So my role is just to explain this and facilitate. Since we are focusing on the asset based approach I don’t know what organizing partners are working on -I don’t have opinions either way . . . my main challenge is that people did not trust me and were like, ‘what are you really going to do for the community?’”

And a third explains her experience this way,

It’s hard to work with organizations that don’t want to work with you. And the reason they have trouble with us is because of this whole model thing. And from the beginning the program officer keeps changing things. It’s been three years now and the organizations that are a part of it are still asking, ‘so what is it? What are we supposed to be doing now? It’s scary to go to the (foundation) meetings because they are changing things all the time. When (Cordero) gets an idea he’s like, “Let’s change this!” Then we have a training, a new part to the model that we have to communicate. For example, we didn’t have the (Assembly) part at the beginning. Then they realized that the farm workers involved needed capacity building before they could get involved with other people at the table. This is so bizarre because then it’s like we are communicating to stakeholders and people who work with farmworkers that we think campesinos are not ‘prepared’ to participate. And that in front of all these people that have been involved for years that *we* are the ones that need to train them. What a weird dynamic to start things off with. They think we are stalling and taking over.

The last coordinator quoted clearly understands what she is up against: a complex theoretical model that keeps changing, an approach that prevents community organizers from organizing, professionalized processes that dismiss long time embedded leadership, and a facilitation style that prevents

the coordinators from supporting and acting on the concerns of the project participants. While all of the coordinators were born and raised in the Central Valley, three in Tulare County, and two are the children of farmworkers the professionalized consensus builder role they found themselves in bred distrust and disrespect from almost all of the partners I interviewed. They were often described in these terms,

. . . these girls with jewelry and pantyhose who go into poor people's houses like they don't want to get dirty. So in the end because they are not like organizers who get dirty in the fields with workers, we end up with the same old thing as usual: outside people getting input from immigrants but not doing a damn thing about it. (Interview with a CR grantee and Director of a farmworker organization, 2008)

They are gatekeepers and are preventing anything from happening. The drumbeat is 'the people aren't ready' so they spend hours and hours at the partner meetings trying to get the asset language down. (Interview with CR grantee and community organizer, 2007)

They are trying to build community connections. The thing is we *are* very well connected already, we work with all these agencies. Why go through a whole new door? (Interview with CR grantee and health educator, 2007)

I'd call them PC technocrats. We intentionally created a lot of tension with them because they don't like organizers and tried to change the way we work but failed miserably. We created a lot of trouble and some of them left. They want to have these poster child committees that are all happy and easy and we want to have a power base that wants action. They are white power brokers of the money of farmworkers. (Interview with a CR grantee, a white male Director of a direct action institution speaking about the Latina coordinators).

In the process of hiring recent college graduates with no leadership, trust, or relationships with farm worker advocacy and no community organizing experience of their own, CR threw the coordinators into the lions' den. Not only do each of the partnering organizations have their own community



organizing methodologies, they also have their own, often competing (as will be described in the next section), constituency and local leadership. To require these groups to work together collaboratively was the first challenge. To require them to operate according to a vague and changing model that prevents action was an even bigger challenge.

The irony of the project's attempt to hire and train professionalized 'neutral' facilitators as opposed to 'old school organizers' to avoid conflict is that these young women ended up dealing with more antagonism and resistance as a direct result of the established institutions' distaste for the consensus and professionalized partnership building process. The pattern of turf battles and competition for funding created during the War on Poverty and the entrenchment of farm worker institutions over the past three decades also created an environment nearly impossible for any community organizer, let alone a young unseasoned professional. Despite the inherent challenge of funding community organizers to not organize, one granted partner suggested that the type of person hired does matter and that if an 'organic immigrant leader' was hired instead of a 'pretty young thing' than these projects might have half a chance. Her example of the type of person who she'd hire was the woman I had along with me on my travels to watch my then 8-month old daughter while I conducted interviews and attended meetings,

Like Maria. She is a perfect example of someone who came here as a migrant, looking to improve the lives of her family and her people. Look how she organized against the raids and for her Mixteco cultural rights in Madera. If we can't pay the 'Maria Lopez' of the world beyond cooks, cleaners, and taking care of our children then we are stuck. This is the kind of woman that needs to take over. Not the (Campesino Rising) women. But many of these women like Maria are also stuck in our macho culture where she can't do a lot until she's talked to Alfredo (Mixteco leader) or her husband.

Throughout my research of the CR project a specifically gendered politics emerged where young, college educated women were deemed 'neutral' and professionalizable, the 'old school ladies' organizers viewed as too confrontational and deeply embedded in institutional politics and turf battles, and the emerging immigrant leaders were rendered silent by virtue of their recent arrival to the scene and gender roles proscribed by their indigenous

cultures. I also found that the hired coordinators were only successful in recruiting women into the process. One coordinator explained, “I noticed one day that when a couple of the women were leaving, their husbands were in the car waiting for them. I said, ‘now why didn’t you just come in!’ But it’s part of the Mexican culture. They just don’t do the community stuff.” (Interview with PP Coordinator, Tulare County, 2007). Because the project was communicated as a ‘community improvement’ effort and not as an attempt to address the grievances of workers (which was avoided for fears of sounding confrontational) Mexican men assumed that it was a ‘women’s thing’ designed for traditional community caregivers that would not require the men’s participation. Ultimately in an attempt to create a neutral and consensus, as opposed to conflict, oriented politics the project’s gendered hiring decisions and framing limited its ability to successfully engage historic community organizing institutions and the majority male farm worker population.

*Take Your Time But Hurry Up: Asset Based Community Development with Direct Action Organizers*

Theoretically all of the granted partners were implementing the CR model by attracting farm worker leaders to neighborhood Committees to talk about getting involved in their communities; assigning farm worker representatives to go to the Assembly for leadership training; and participating in city Councils to map community assets and identify issues to work on at the Regional Council level. In reality, funded partnering organizations both did not understand and resisted the model from the start. Here are some examples of how partners rejected the consensus building process,

It was not clear what to expect or what kinds of outcomes they wanted to see. It got off to a slow start. Especially for the organizing partners because we were not supposed to focus on any issues until the (Committees and Assemblies and Councils) were formed. We had all this money and not much to do. (Interview with CR Partner, Program Director from Mixteco Service Provider and Organizing Institution, 2007)

I think that what (CR) is really trying to do is just create a model and eventually to create non-confrontational issues, things to do like creating work plans. I think what they want us

to do is help them move to a place where this model can play out. (Interview with CR Partner, Legal Aid Staff Person, 2008)

(CR) is a fluid structure in search of an animating energy . . . we have burned through enough leaders who are asking, “Why all these new methods?” They will never gain new consciousness that can only be built through research and action, with all these coordinators and boring meetings. It’s tiresome.” (Interview with CR Partner, City Planner and Chair of a direction action organizing institution)

I struggle with it. I have issues with the capacity building approach. I am more about results. Much of it is fluff, very theoretical and too much focus on by-laws and mission statements. I keep asking myself, what has this done for the people? (Interview with PP partner, City Wellness Center Coordinator)

When it was first proposed it was really out there in the clouds. I could not grasp what they wanted. It’s like climate change and social change, very pie in the sky. There are so many components I can’t figure out what I’m supposed to be doing. (Interview with PP partner, Community Organizer)

It was immediately clear that all of the partners rejected the professional staff and the project design. The issue based organizers were frustrated that they were funded to be ‘organizing partners’ but were prohibited from allowing their members to identify issues, such as pesticides, water rights, abuse of workers in the fields or immigration reform to organize around. Service providers were wary of a project that required so many meetings that did not include any planning around service delivery. City officials did not want to spend their time on processes that had no immediate implications for their constituents. The CR Coordinators describe what occurs at the Assembly and Council levels that inspire such widespread critique,

We need to start with the basics. Some people here don’t even know what an agenda is so we are starting with explaining what an agenda is and how to use Roberts Rules of Order. We have an 18-month funding timeline so we need to get people up to speed. We are also working on building a structure for our meetings,

ground rules and things. Then we will get to talking about what they like about their community – what assets they would want to preserve and use to improve things. (Interview with Assembly Coordinator, 2007)

I would describe our meetings as getting everybody trained enough to do this work for themselves. So we spend time getting the same language of assets down, how to create a mission statement, how to create guidelines to work by. The meeting tonight we are going to talk about the model of the Council and how it should work, then we'll discuss our mission and vision, do an asset training, and then plan our first celebration. (Interview with Council Coordinator, 2007).

Our goal is to get the group to map the assets in the whole community but now we are meeting to create a vision and mission and come up with group values and rules –like don't be late and things like that. And I have to review the model again– that its assets not action based. (Interview with Council Coordinator, 2007)

Over a six-month period I attended several Council meetings and the monthly partner meetings that granted organizations were required to attend. At each of these meetings, one of the paid staff people would conduct an ad-hock 'quiz' on the five community health assets, while participants and partnering organizational staff mumbled to themselves and slowly volunteered answers like stubborn school children: public - environmental - community - social – economic. When I pushed project coordinators to discuss what kinds of things Council or Assembly participants would like to work on some specific issues did sometimes come up. But when they did, it was immediately determined that 'it's not time to act yet' because the consensus building process needed to be played out first.

Here are two examples,

Erica: Have any critical issues ever emerged from a meeting that people want to work on?

Assembly Coordinator: At one meeting a mayordomo (field supervisor) came and after listening to everybody he was

like, ‘wow, I had no idea these things were happening on the job.’ The rest of the workers were talking about how the water is dirty, there are no toilets in the fields, women are being taken advantage of and abused. This is still going on and in many cases for women it is the only way to get ahead.

Erica: Are these issues, like sexual and other abuses in the fields, things that the Council will bring up as priorities to work on?

Assembly Coordinator: Well, these are not the kinds of issues that we’d take to the Council. There we will work on asset maps and health plans. The challenge is that we need to wait for the Assembly reps to get done training the worker reps and then they can join the Council. They can’t do anything without the reps there . . . and now the Councils don’t have the ag voice at all, workers or growers, and this is supposed to be community based so we can’t do anything without them at the table.

And an interview with a Council Coordinator,

Erica: So when you ask people what they’d like to see improved, what has come up thus far?

Council Coordinator: One woman talked about the high grass in her backyard and how there were drug dealers and prostitutes that used it every day. And this is an unincorporated area so they don’t really have police or any help. So then I turn it around and say, ‘How can we see this place as an asset?’ She answered my question by envisioning a clean yard with a place for kids to play. So we can then turn these problems into assets.

Erica: Is this something that they are now going to work on together?

Council Coordinator: No, we are not about doing things right now. Maybe in the future this is the kind of thing they

might want to do. But lots of people are just affected by looking at things differently. The goal is to build the capacity for them to be ready to do things for themselves first - hold meetings, understand plans, see assets instead of just problems, and provide a structure before they work on issues.

This planning process was going on for one year before I began conducting research in the spring of 2007 and was still underway when I completed fieldwork in the spring of 2008. Because the granted organizing partners rejected this slow and to them patronizing process, they quickly became hesitant to bring their 'best leaders' to the Assembly or to the Councils, for fear of 'losing them' to CR. In the words of one organizer,

In our (Committee) we train for organizing and action. But at the (Council) level we can't even talk. At the (Council) we have to sit around learning about assets. Leaders that I send there say to me, 'we are tired of being breast-fed, we are growing and need more substance. They are talking about the same thing each time, no action.' The leaders say to me, 'Don't send me there'. So I have to be careful about losing leaders for our own organizational membership if they get anxious about so many meetings with no action. (Interview with lead organizer of a PICO trained CR granted partner, 2008)

Despite the organizing partners' frustration with the Assembly and Council process, they were required by their grant contracts to send farm worker representatives to these meetings and as a result ended up competing with one another for local leaders to send as representatives. This dynamic bred intense competition and slander among the organizing grantees. In the words of organizers from three different granted organizing partners,

I'm not really sure that the other organizing partners really have (committees) like we do. You saw how no one really wants to talk about what they are doing at (CR) meetings . . . we have a process and have been building leadership for real. (Interview with PICO trained granted partner, 2008)

Lupe (other organizer) has no relations in the community. And people know they don't really do much organizing and just give

workers a bad name. So now they go in the back door through these other guises to get their own membership quota. (Interview with granted partner organizer from historic migrant organization, 2008)

We get to the meeting and they are like, ‘so how many people are you bringing? Which are your leaders?’ And we claim them all because the others are not bringing anybody. The ones they want to bring, well I know them from way back from my years in the community and those people are not the ones that are going to do anything -just the same old regulars that join everything. But these guys (other organizers) don’t know because they are just going in and starting all over again what has been done before. Anyways, they had only one person and I had four. (Interview with organizer from partner organization from historic farm worker movement institution, 2008)

In addition to the organizations’ distrust of and competition amongst one another within the CR framework they were also conflicted by commitments to other funders. Many funded organizations received large grants from the State of California under the First Five (early childhood education) program and were required to provide First Five educational materials and trainings to all of their community groups. So while some of the membership based organizations preferred to ‘keep members for themselves’ rather than of ‘losing them to CR’ others were accused of only convening people to provide the services prescribed by other funders like First Five and other private foundations and not organizing CR committees.

Community organizers were not the only ones having difficulty bringing representatives to the table. With all of the consensus worker-grower talk, none of the Councils could attract membership from agribusiness. Not only did grower representatives not find a reason to collaborate with worker advocates, but as people who plan around busy planting and harvest times they are even less tolerant of meetings and processes that have no immediate results. With no workers and no growers consistently participating at the Council level and with coordinators advised to ‘stick to mapping assets’ until workers and growers would sit together at the table, the project could not move forward. In the midst of this standstill, and with a threat from the foundation board that the project better show measurable outcome if funding was to be continued, Cordero, the lead program officer, called a small group

of advisors together and decided to break from the consensus model and require the partnership to take on anti-pesticide organizing. However, this last ditch attempt to rally partners did not work both because it contradicted the original consensus and partner driven model and because of the foundation's lack of knowledge about anti-pesticide strategy and fear of confrontation with growers. According to Cordero,

I mentioned, as an example of something that they could start to work on together, potential action on a particular bill on pesticide drift. Last year a bill was signed by the governor with very few people following it. It was an emergency alert bill on pesticide drift – but it was flawed. Usually the public health official is the point person for any drift emergency. But in this bill it was said to be the Agricultural Commissioner! So I told everyone that they could educate people about this bill at the (CR) sites, train people how to recognize drift, file reports, hold the alert system accountable. And then when there is no response to an emergency then mobilize to complain and go to legislation to fix the bill . . . but the organizational leaders were upset because me, from the foundation, was bringing in issues while I've always talked about it coming from the people . . . it's hard because at the foundation I am constantly pushed to show success. The board can say that they believe in a long-term community building approach but at the same time they press for measured outcomes. I am not even secure that the money for the future of this project is guaranteed. I need to figure out how to show that conditions for improved health has increased. I'd like to do something similar to environmental justice approach . . . And because my project is about farm workers and not just service providers it's more controversial and I'm under more scrutiny to show results.

My interview with partners confirmed that while some of them supported the idea of organizing around the pesticide drift alert system, they resented being told by the foundation what to focus on after Cordero's insistence on the community driven model. However a more fatal critique of the foundation's last minute attempt to take on the pesticide drink alert system came from partners with experience working on this issue. A staff person with a pesticide action group hired as a technical assistance partner to CR found the process of landing on pesticide organizing even more frustrating than the other partners asked to take it on,



I am at the Policy Committee Meeting that (Felipe Cordero) just formed to deal with actually getting something done through the initiative. I was so frustrated . . . we are all asked to talk about what it would look like if we brought assets to an issue. They (Felipe and a hired consultant) wanted to take SB 391 as the hypothetical to work on. What was so frustrating is that we (pesticide organization) already have a strategy for this and SB 391 lends itself terribly to collective action with (CR) partners. I would have picked the buffer zones issue because people could identify necessary buffer zones in their communities to work on. But SB 391 all happens at area guidelines that are already developed and for this what is needed is to develop talking points and turn people out at hearings. But it is not a broad and creative issue. We are the pesticide partner, why not talk to us about which pesticide issues would lend itself to collective action? . . . so then I asked if this is a hypothetical exercise or are we really working on this? So in response to my question (Felipe), in a fit of excitement, says, “Let work on this! Lets get to work!” And then I’m like ‘oh my god, these people have no idea.’ But they acted excited. And then the next day the entire partnership was mandated to work on this . . . Later there was the pushback from the (Convening Partner). They kind of were frustrated with us because we were trying to make it happen and it goes against the model. Plus every partner has a separate grant agreement and are not all of a sudden supposed to work together. So they are all asking, so what is it that we are now supposed to do? Who gets the credit for it? We ended up pulling away from the partnership thing and just working with two groups that were interested in pesticides. So now we have to figure out how to work around the (CR) director who is still very much about the asset process. How to include her yet get her out of the way so that we can do the organizing work. Its just so hard because she tells the (committees) that its not about pesticides, it must come through what the (committees) want to work on. It is all supposed to come from the ‘we’ but who is the ‘we’? . . . I also had to tell the evaluator consultant that the model is getting in the way. That the (Convening Partner) is stopping things from happening. This is the first time that we talked to an evaluator consultant about problems related to doing direct service vs. organizing and that what we are doing is not ever going to be about social capital! I also told her that SB 391 is not good and that buffer zones is. She kind of went, “whoopps!” (Interview with CR Pesticide Partner, 2008)

The three PP partnering organizations with a history in anti-pesticide organization agree that the larger underlying dilemma is that it is impossible to address pesticide poisoning through consensus building processes, especially with grower and country officials at the table. In the words of one organizer,

The problem is that this model is silent on where capital won't budge. The things that we can't win through dialogue. I really wonder if (Felipe) understands this? Or is he in denial? Testing us? Testing boundaries? Or maybe just pretending. People in the Valley are acting all nice about the project in public, from the people who want money from the initiative. But pesticide activists in San Francisco are asking, 'what happens when capital smacks up against a wall?' (Interview with Pesticide Partner of CR, 2008)

And another similarly proposes,

For anything to really happen we are going to need to make some demands, protest, but of course that doesn't fit with the model. 'We are not there yet' is what they'd say. The Tulare County Board of Supervisors is made up of all republican, conservative growers. So collectively taking on pesticides in Tulare Country is laughable when we can't even get growers or supervisors to participate. We are just so far apart from those in power. We need to shake things up but the foundation won't let us push on anything. (Interview with CR partner from historic farm worker advocacy organization)

The failure of the pesticide organizing attempt reveals how the foundation driven approach was flawed, poorly planned, and against the grain of the culture of community organizing. At a larger level it also reveals how, in the context of industrialized agriculture and its deeply embedded political support system, consensus among diverse and unequal groups is near impossible and sometimes undesirable. According to the consensus model, truly addressing the living, working, and health problems experienced by workers would raise too many issues that immediately 'scare-off' growers. Complicating this basic limitation is the reality that from most accounts, even the community organizing institutions are not addressing the issues that

most concern farm workers. In the context of the increasing and unannounced raids on immigrant households, the predominantly un-unionized workforce, and growing job insecurity, drought and financial crisis, organizers have only managed to take on ‘safe issues’ such as putting up stop signs and street-lights in farm worker neighborhoods. The organizers I interviewed all critiqued the other organizing institutions in the Valley. They claimed that others are only organizing themselves to gain institutional membership and foundation grants. The competitive and project oriented institutional funding culture makes building a farmworker power base even more difficult. The irony is this situation is that in a time marked by fear, hopelessness, and competition, the consensus model is least helpful but does makes most sense. In an unimaginative environment where everyone is fearful of confronting growers, the consensus based processes keeps people engaged yet further entrenches a way of thinking that sees working on behalf of industry as the best way to help improve the lives of workers.

### **Diffusing the Poles, Creating a New Center: social change or social control?**

Embracing the moment of alliance between workers and growers, inspired by the current desperation of both immigrant workers and economically struggling farms and exemplified in the AgJobs legislation, the UFW affiliated Farm Worker Institute for Education and Leadership Development’s (FIELD)<sup>108</sup> ‘Win-Win’ model is bringing workers to the table with growers. Unlike the conflicted Campesino Rising, FIELD’s model is explicitly against community organizing and any form of antagonistic or grievance oriented politics. Instead of identifying organizers as the key players as the troubled CR attempted, FIELD’s ‘Win-Win’ model puts growers at the center, asking how workers can help farms increase productivity and the lives of workers at once.

In order to reveal the specific limitations to the current moment of antagonism free politics, in the context of worker-grower partnerships, I conclude this chapter with a brief analysis of the FIELD ‘Win-Win’

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<sup>108</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, interviews with FIELD staff and observations at FIELD meetings were included in the 10 interview subjects approved as ‘public leaders’ in the Human Subjects protocols for this project, and are therefore named. FIELD’s relationship to historic movement organizations and leaders situates its work in the ‘public arena.’ Interview subjects approved to be named in this dissertation.

model.<sup>109</sup> The original inspiration for FIELD's 'Win-Win' approach grew out of Cesar Chavez' interest in management theory and his relationship with business management gurus such as Peter Drucker and Patrick Below.<sup>110</sup> In the late 1970s Cesar Chavez started to ask if a union should be into management. By this time the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) had won major contracts, succeeded in passing worker protection laws and were providing services through the various nonprofit organizations associated with the union including a medical plan with growing contributions from growers. According to long time movement leaders, Chavez could out organize anyone. And he was a farmworker himself so he was excellent at organizing farmworkers. However, according to many people close to the movement, he was never a good manager, and critics have blamed his inability to manage contracts and relationships as a major failure of the movement, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Cesar's growing interest in management was very controversial at the time because 'Management' is commonly slandered as a dirty word among union leadership. Despite the widespread critique Cesar grew increasingly interested in planning and finding ways to measure the progress in serving farm workers across the various institutional wings of the movement. His interest in building and managing institutions grew around the time of the internal leadership battles that prompted all of the movement attorneys and volunteers to leave, also described in Chapter Two. Without the legal team and a diminished pool of volunteer organizers, Cesar made the decision to train and hire local people, close to the family and to the La Paz community, including his son Paul, his son-in-law David Villarino, and a handful of others whom Cesar trusted to run the institutional aspects of the movement including the various non-profit organizations such as the housing, medical, and social service programs. Chavez trained these leaders, and several eventually received degrees from business schools. Management experts

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<sup>109</sup> Data collected on FIELD includes observation of FIELD trainings, interviews with FIELD staff, and review of program documents explaining the goals and design of the project.

<sup>110</sup> Cesar Chavez' meeting with Peter Drucker in 1981 is marked by movement leaders as a significant moment in his shift away from union organizing and towards institutional management and planning, as mentioned in Chapter Two. In this meeting Drucker also suggested that 'immigrants' and not 'farm workers' are the central constituents to the UFW and if embraced as such would move the union towards greater power and success in the agriculture industry (UFW Archives, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University). It is not clear whether Drucker's advice had anything to do with the UFW's decision to focus their attentions on immigration reform through the AgJobs legislation, as Chavez did not move in this direction during his lifetime.

such as Peter Drucker and Patrick Below became some of Chavez' most prized consultants and visionaries in his effort to transform the 'movement' through the management of institutions.

The specific origins of the current model promoted by the UFW affiliated FIELD is traced back to a near loss of a contract with a rose farm, Bear Creek Roses, that resulted in an innovative management experiment. In the early 1990's the UFW was struggling to keep contracts due to increased competition with the Teamsters and the legacy of the change in organizing staff and leadership as a result of the purges and fall-outs that occurred in 1979 through the 1980's, and a general failure to organize members and gain contracts. In 1994, one year after Chavez' death, the UFW gained a contract with Bear Creek Roses in the Central Valley town of Wasco. In the beginning the union made a large number of grievances that created animosity and conflict between the union and the grower. The Union almost lost the contract and David Villarino, a UFW organizer and leader and current director of FIELD, whom I interviewed, believes that this would have been an immense if not final blow for the union at a time when they were struggling to maintain and gain new contracts. At this time Patrick Below, one of the management experts Chavez had built a relationship with, convinced the inner circle of UFW leadership to help Bear Creek set up worker trainings that the grower would also benefit from. The central idea behind Below's proposal was that an organization must be understood as a whole and not by the sum of its parts. In this respect successful strategic change should not be about the concerns of workers or owners but rather a cooperative attempt to improve the business as a whole. He theorized that with this kind of "self-interest and conflict free" planning, everyone will benefit.

According to Villarino, the most important thing that Below did at Bear Creek was facilitate a process where workers and owners together "created a mission of mutual prosperity and respect, and innovative thinking for improving the company."<sup>111</sup> Villarino recalls,

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<sup>111</sup> According to an article in *Rural Migration News* (October 2000, Volume 6, Number 4), "The UFW says that its agreement with Bear Creek (Jackson & Perkins Rose) Production Company in Wasco, California is an example of how the "new UFW" is willing and able to cooperate with farm employers to enhance employer profitability while increasing wages and benefits for workers . . . The UFW won an election to represent Bear Creek workers December 16, 1994, and signed a three-year contract on March 17, 1995 that increased wages and benefits 22 percent over the life of the contract . . . The UFW-Bear Creek relationship got off to a rocky start, with 136 grievances filed in the contract's first 18 months. In July 1996, Bear Creek contacted the UFW

This was genius thinking because we don't usually work with growers in this kind of context of mutual prosperity. It was also genius because we created a 1.5 million dollar profit after implementing a 30% production increase for the two types of roses they produce. The workers were better educated and more trained and in the end the worker crews were making decisions and did not even need a foreman anymore. This helped to raise wages and earnings for the piecemeal work and doubled vacation time. The normal lost days in December that year decreased by 1,000 percent. This was a huge paradigm shift because the company was using the farmworkers' knowledge, utilizing it to the benefit of the enterprise. And the company committed to sharing the gains and maintaining employment for workers not the job. For us this was a revolutionary lesson for the Union. (Interview with David Villarino, 2008)

The Bear Creek project eventually broke down; "it was ultimately their (growers) vision and us helping them reach it. Eventually the manager took credit for all of it and distrust amongst workers ended it all" (Interview with David Villarino, 2008). However, the idea of 'Win-Win' planning became central to the new approach of the UFW. A near decade after the Bear Creek experience the UFW engaged all of its various institutions (the union and the 8 'movement office' organizations) and leaders in a strategic planning process. The 2000 meetings served as a 'wake-up call' and it was agreed upon that that, "Everyone has failed farmworkers. The growers have not changed, educational institutions are failing farmworker children, training and workforce development efforts have done nothing for farmworkers . . . and the union failed with 98% of the industry with no contracts" (FIELD planning document shared by David Villarino). At this meeting it was

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about the troublesome relationship, and a two-day session was held in September 1996 to resolve outstanding grievances; it resulted in a pledge to work together as the UFW-Bear Creek partnership. Under the partnership, supervisors and union representatives were retrained to enable them to resolve disputes before they escalated into grievances. Bear Creek workers were asked to make productivity increasing suggestions without fear of layoffs. As a result, the quality of the bare-root roses produced at Bear Creek increased markedly, from 40 percent premium in 1996 to 54 percent premium in 1999 . . . According to the UFW, average hourly earnings rose from \$7.62 in 1997 to \$8.02 in 1999, the number of foremen was reduced, and the number of workers' compensation claims reduced by half."

agreed upon to forget about contracts and direct organizing and instead to look at poverty, the whole life of the farmworker, and how to make farm work a livable career. One of the ways it was proposed that this new direction would be implemented was to use the Bear Creek model through the union associated nonprofit, Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD). David Villarino was asked to head-up this effort. According to Villarino,

It was proposed that I use the existing UFW nonprofit FIELD to implement the Bear Creek Roses model across the industry. Cesar founded the original FIELD in 1979, with support of the Carter and Brown administrations. At first he was doing a lot of workforce development stuff like auto-mechanic training, word processing, culinary careers. In the 1970's Cesar was very serious about the need to make agriculture a career, a job that has dignity, so this was his 'workforce development' wing of the movement. The revived FIELD originally got DOL (Department of Labor) money from the Clinton administration to fill the skill gap between workforce development and industry needs. We used the theory behind Bear Creek – that if we cross train workers in Roses and in Grapes than we can increase production and the average workweek (Interview with David Villarino, 2008).

First FIELD convened a research consortium that conducted the first ever in depth research on the agricultural workforce, charting the various skill sets and demographics of workers. Through this research it became clear that agricultural skill sets were never identified by any state, federal or other workforce research. The research team found that during the Manpower workforce development project of the 1950's even though people were asking what would be done about workers in agriculture, the industry was practically ignored. Instead of investing in the agricultural workforce policy makers assumed that everything would be rapidly mechanized and that the agricultural workforce would shrink to insignificance. However, what eventually happened was that only labor-intensive crops showed economic growth. While the California seed, pesticide, and land use technologies once gave the United States the competitive advantage globally, others countries have now caught up on this fronts (Mexico, Spain, S. America, and China) and agricultural industrialists quickly realized that the one area that they never fully developed, and that could be used to their competitive advantage,

was the labor force.<sup>112</sup> From these findings, FIELD developed programs to improve the critical advantage of California farms through improving worker productivity and worker-manager relations. The Bear Creek concept to simultaneously help workers become more productive and growers more competitive was solidified in the “industrial partnerships” facilitated by FIELD. This new approach marked a significant break from the movement’s union and community organizing approach.

As FIELD staff set out to build collaborations with large growers and Farm Bureaus they initially faced the problem that they were identified with the UFW. To combat this identification, FIELD staff surrounded themselves with industry people that growers trusted to show that they were not about grievances or confrontation. Even though the president of the UFW, and other UFW leaders sit on FIELD’s board of directions and FIELD is described as a ‘Movement Office’ of the United Farm Workers, staff describe their relationship to the union as inconsequential. The lead ‘industrial partners’ coordinator at FIELD, Joaquin Garza, was particularly instrumental in building the first FIELD partnerships. An ex-field worker and then manager with Foster Farms, and a business school graduate, Garza is adept at building relationships with growers, and explaining the FIELD model in non-confrontational business terms. I observed that while Garza’s business training and the FIELD model served well in building industrial partnerships, it raised concern among many farm worker advocates and organizers. Through FIELD trainings<sup>113</sup> the limits to what could be addressed through the ‘New Win-Win Paradigm’ was revealed. Below is a brief synopsis of the FIELD model, followed by critiques that uncover the disguised limits to a grievance free approach to improving conditions for farm workers.

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<sup>112</sup> While not discussed by FIELD staff, using undocumented immigrants that earn below minimum wages is one way that farmers with large labor-intensive crops keep costs down and maintain their competitive edge. The Union-Grower alliance on immigration reform contributes to the ‘Win-Win’ model by ensuring a secure future of low wage (temporarily legal) immigrant labor through guest worker programs.

<sup>113</sup> This description of the ‘Win-Win’ paradigm is an amalgamation of FIELD presentation power point charts, verbal presentations, and written documentation from various FIELD trainings.



## **The ‘New Win-Win Paradigm’**

**The Goal of FIELD:** finding the common and uncommon ground between workers and growers to keep farms in California and improve the agricultural industry together.

**Why Collaborate / Issues Facing Agriculture:** The price of doing business in California is extremely high. Due to the rising costs of land, water, equipment, and labor, health and safety, and pesticide regulations many farms are leaving the state. Many farms can’t afford to abide by the current laws and find it cheaper to either pay the fines or leave the state. With escalating local and global competition and intensified consumer demands it is time to realize that sometimes the restrictions we put on our employers are unrealistic. Mexico and China don’t have these restrictions this makes it hard for us to compete. In order to prevent companies from moving to Mexico for cheaper labor and land the only solutions is that labor has to contribute more.

**First Step: Let’s Get Into How Growers Think:** Our biggest problem in California agriculture is that there is no advancement here in the human capital we use, and we need to get the bosses caring more about training their workers. We can do a lot to improve this and the education and training has much greater outcomes than just in the workplace. Because there is a lack of training and a lack of workers moving up into management culture, we have lost our edge in the global market. Our only value that we can work with is human capital. So we have to improve and change labor operations to differentiate ourselves from our competitors.

**Next: Labor-Management Alliances:** for the UFW, 30-40 years ago, it was necessary to put up a fight. Now we need to work together to keep agriculture in California. Now we’ve brokered a relationship to benefit the union, the workers, and the growers. Before if an employer doesn’t do what we want, we would take the hard line and try to shut them down. Now we make alliances, we build trust, respect, and collaboration. We do trainings that are customized for what the particular grower needs. So when we do leadership training it is not about organizing anymore, we use a more business model and focus on conflict resolution rather than conflict. We work on transforming the entire operation to create better workers and better worker/employer relations.

**Cooperation vs. Collaboration:** Cooperation really means do what the growers say. Collaboration means that everyone sits at the table and brings each other's ideas and resources. After our training, the businesses that we work with want workers to co-own management decisions. We are moving management from what we call 'do as I say' leadership to 'servant leadership' which is how to be a leader to our servants. So we work on finding what we can both agree on. Growers never care about wants, theirs or ours. They are concerned with their own needs as a business. So we focus on what is most important to them.

**Leadership Training:** growers always first think that we want to train workers towards the union and towards activism. I say, no, we are training towards supervision and becoming a foreman -to work *with* you and to do the job better. We do a lot of conflict resolution training. What is the management concept? We start by talking to individuals, supervisors, as our informants. We ask: what do they need? What need to change? What can we do better? How do we build a sustainable future? How can we improve standard operating procedures in order to improve the production of the product? So we talk business with them.

**Changing the Culture of the Organization:** We are behind the ball in our cooperative and collaborative work culture. We need to get people thinking about needs not wants. Often workers ask for wants and not needs so the bosses get frustrated. The first step is finding out what we both agree on: To get in with the grower we first need to do our research and understand: what have they done well, what are they about, what is their management concept. I need to figure out why they would work with me. What do they need? I go in asking, what could you do better? What do you do well that could be expanded?

**The Win-Win Paradigm:** Normally with unions and companies it's an I win, you lose framework. With Win-Win I have to figure out what you want to win, what I want to win and where I can stand to lose a little, and what we can do together. Ultimately we have to ask, are we in the business to shut down business or to keep business in California viable? We realized that we are here for the same thing the growers will always ask, what is in it for me? And monetary investment is what they are interested in. We try to get them looking beyond money to worker health, quality, education. So all of the

wins we talk about need to be clearly identified and results we need to be able to see. Some things are always going to be lose-lose, like pesticides, and might be a ten-year battle. So we need to be clear about what we can and what we cannot work together on. So what do we have in common? We first look for what I call the low-lying fruit. The resources we can together get to workers and growers like what kind of resources can we get to help-out during a freeze? We need to know, what do workers care about? Are they going to care about the harvest if their children are sick? So how can we help with healthcare and transport? What is the connection between what we do and what they do? To break the ice with growers it's all about finding the connection with individuals. Hey, he likes speedboats, now I do too. You need to be a salesperson to get commitment from them. Before going into to a meeting know your minimal expected commitments that you want to walk away with.

**Monterey Mushrooms Example:** We helped them go from 2.4 to 5.7 million-dollar profit after FIELD operated a new \$200,000 collaboration program. Now we do this program in 3 plants. This was a big win for the company and a win for workers to. Because we standardized production procedures and techniques the workers can now pick more and make more per hour. We put in “standard operating procedures” that all can agree to in order to increase efficiency. We look for ‘what do we have in common: we want to keep workers healthy. We want to build leadership in the workplace. We want workers who can problem solve, give management new ideas. The workers concern is not about the paycheck, it's about having a voice, to be valued.

In my observations and analysis of FIELD's “Win-Win Paradigm” I identified three specific contradictions that expose the limitations to a grievance and antagonism free politics. The first contradiction is the necessity to cater to the agricultural business culture, way of working, talking, and thinking in order to engage in theoretically ‘collaborative’ democratic processes. At one FIELD workshop a frustrated farmworker advocate asked, “How are we supposed to both bring them in on their terms when the process is supposed to be equal for all involved? What about the workers’ terms? ”. FIELD staff completely understands that growers have no interest in collaborating on terms defined by worker grievances, needs, or abuses of legal codes and regulations. And worker advocates wonder what will ever be achieved if the way worker interests have always been expressed is not acceptable anymore. A pesticide organizer put it this way,

“At the FIELD workshop I became very concerned with where this is going. Is it only education but not change based? There is this assumption that by sitting down together all will be resolved. Sitting down, and on their terms, means nothing really.” I argue that ‘Win-Win’ collaboration that starts at the place where the most powerful is the most comfortable, and excludes the situations that make them uncomfortable, is neither democratic or change based. The theoretical question that remains is whether antagonism-free pluralistic democracy is possible in a society with such great social, economic, and political divides. Can true consensus be achieved between parties with such divergent and unequal power? Even a champion of the consensus-based model who runs a statewide “sustainable agriculture” project designed to bring diverse stakeholders to the table around sustainable agriculture systems in California admits that,

The Central Valley is a lot tougher. We tried to start an AFA (collaborative committee) in Merced but that folded . . . we didn’t have enough environmentalists in the middle. We had some farm worker advocates and growers, but they were so very polarized. In the Merced case there were simply too many extremes. You see, in Ventura and on the many small and organic farms we’ve worked with we were able to take the power away from the poles. We need to take the power away from the edges and bring it to the center. Our philosophy and organizing approach is inspired by the work of Dee Hock<sup>114</sup> - that the poles of debate stop everything. Poles control the process and you always end with a stalemate. And politicians won’t take leadership because it is too risky. But in the Central Valley we had no ‘Center’, no real way to move away from the poles in a way that was authentic. (Interview with Michael Dimock, Roots of Change, 2008).

A second question that the FIELD project and that Michael Dimock of Roots of Change allude to is the dynamic of facilitation and the subjectivities and identities that ‘consensus building’ assumes. What kind of facilitative leadership is assumed in the process of attempting to ‘diffuse poles’ and create a ‘new center’ as Dimock proposes. What kind of partners are imagined as ‘bridge builders’ as opposed to those who create ‘extreme

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<sup>114</sup> Dee Hock is a management and leadership scholar whose book *Birth of the Chaotic Age* was frequently cited by Roots of Change director, Michael Dimock.

poles.’ The organizers and coordinators I interviewed and observed in Tulare County recognized the dilemma of the ‘white looking’ men, trained in business school, as the ones who have the capacity to negotiate with growers. They also recognize that this limited scope of facilitators marks the unrealistic nature of a politics that claims to operate solely on commonality and that erases difference. One workshop member feared that she would not be interested in or even capable of implementing the model,

I was annoyed when Joaquin said that in order to make the grower connect with you, you need to act like him, “If you like speed boats, I like speed boats” I am not a white man or I don’t look like one, so this kind of talk won’t work for me with growers. And anyway we need to really change things because conditions have not changed since I was picking oranges as a child. We get the same amount per box today from when I was 10 years old. The only change is that today kids can’t work as young. (Latina farmworker advocate interested in building partnerships with growers, Interview 2008).

Others agreed that it would feel insincere to speak of implementing a democratic model for improving farm worker communities and then speak to growers in a way that only communicated that you are here to help them improve profit. Some farmworker advocates interested in the idea of collaborating with growers naively insisted that out of fairness they would still only approach growers with a plea to help ‘improve farmworker communities.’ These organizers have yet to see any grower participation.

The third dilemma revealed in the Win-Win model is that in the condition that the collaborative negotiation processes must always start with and respect the interests of growers, certain things remain off the negotiation table forever. While agreement may be made on particular production strategies, what about things that were not agreed upon or were prevented from discussion in the first place? In response to a workshop participants’ question: “What we will never address through this process?” Garza, the FIELD trainer, responded,

Growers in lettuce and in strawberries don’t want to talk about labor so I’d stay away from labor issues in terms of unionization all together. Others are not scared of unions coming at them but they are scared of compliance and the

government putting them out of business, like ICE (Immigration Control and Enforcement) and OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration). They listen to the news, of owners in jail for hiring illegal workers. If you ask them anything about paperwork on employer safety regulations . . . boy do they get quiet. It simply costs too much to enforce. They would prefer to pay to \$500 fine if they get caught then make all the changes that would bring them up to code on all of the regulations. Until the laws and the penalties match up better they won't invest in safety programs. I'd stay closer to how we can help the business. For growers its all about regulation, immigration, land use, and transport . . . Of course we will never touch on who owns the land, the capital, the whole industry. Who owns the land has the power.

When a follow-up question was asked if since the interests and culture of the companies are always profit, how can one achieve anything beyond profit, Garza replied.

Yes, they are mostly interested in the bottom line but what we can do is together work on a strategic plan for improvements instead of problems. Growers are only good at producing their product so it's our job to educate them about the other things like services and training available.

What is off the table, and has become untouchable and for some even unthinkable to address makes the consensus or 'Win-Win' approach a strange choice for advocates interested in making agriculture a "respectable profession" with dignity, pride, and opportunity, as is ultimately desired by FIELD. The context of increased global competition, and fear of worker deportation among immigrant workers and growers alike has created a climate where the 'Wins' involved in workforce development and immigration reform outweigh losing sight of the historic battles for workers rights including the abuses in the fields, poor health and safety practices, pesticide poisoning, and the financial, mental, sexual, physical, and psychological abuses still commonly experienced today.

Given the current desperation of both workers and growers, very few of my interview subjects questioned the very goal of keeping large industrial farms in California. Farmers with a long history in plowing the fields of California

want to stay out of nostalgia, family heritage, business networks, and determination to not allowing real estate development to pave over the heartland of California agriculture. With the deep and intertwined relationship between poor Mexican pueblos and the farm fields of California, advocates have become increasingly interested in making business easier for growers in order to secure jobs, maintain the viability of bi-national networks established around the industry, and protect migrants whose families on both sides of the US and Mexico border rely on California farm labor patterns. Without the farms there would be no jobs, families would increasingly set out on the road to live as homeless migrant workers, scattering families across states and borders. In the face of financial crisis and drought, this is already beginning to happen. On the other hand, some things might also change for the better. If the large industrial farms of California were forced to change or leave, the enduring poverty, marginalization, and abuses in farm worker communities might dissipate. Small farms and organic farms might find an open and lucrative market. Cooperatives and ownership might increase among established immigrant farm families. However, throughout the two year course of my fieldwork only one interview informant asked the question, ‘Why should we spend our time saving these big farms.’ She was a farm worker and community organizer from Tulare Country,

Saying that to help us all out we should help keep big farms here is like saying that you have this baseball team that you go to see, and then you end up fighting for the team to hire some star player who makes the owner tons of money that none of us ever see. Then on top of that now with the new popularity we have to pay \$150 for a ticket, and with all the building and parking they are polluting our town. What do we really get in the end? I say it should be about helping the workers or nothing at all. We should be clear about that. We need to ask if we really want to partner with farms here. The reason that people like him say that we are no longer in time to fight, like 30-40 years ago, is only because they grew up, got good jobs, drive good cars, or formed these big organizations like FIELD or the UFW. They’ve been there and then got comfortable. (Interview with farmworker organization part-time staff and soccer coach, 2008)

The dilemmas raised by the call to ‘save industry’ to ‘save jobs’ is similarly playing out in other industries and represents the current ‘post-globalization’ moment where the excess and financial security of ‘the big guys’ has been shattered, opening the door for a ‘win-win’ politics. While unique and unprecedented partnerships are emerging, such as the worker ownership arrangements of the United Auto Workers, much is being kept off the table and deemed unimaginable. Just as in this era has opened and closed doors, such as unprecedented business support for immigration reform and closed the door to farm worker organizing, other eras have similarly made certain ways of seeing possible or impossible. The complex relationship between particular political-economic moments in time, entrenched immigration and labor patterns, the maturation of social movement organizations, and the specific governing and management ideas of planners, facilitators, and funders across a region as divided as California’s Central Valley shape the very possibilities for social change.

In this chapter I have argued that there are significant limits to improving conditions and rights for farm workers through a consensus-based politics. The model itself has disguised the real possibilities, blinding even those who care the most about changing the farm labor system. Only one ex-farm worker proposed that perhaps fighting for workers, and letting industrialized farms leave or change, is a viable solution. A few are, not so publically, critiquing the AgJobs partnership and are fighting for guest worker-free immigration reform. Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the UFW, is going back to the basics and organizing farm worker neighborhoods door-to-door through her recently founded, Dolores Huerta Foundation. Even Huerta, a seasoned organizer and political actor finds this current moment challenging. In her words,

Once you train a good organizer they are then ready to pick up and leave for something better in a better region. All these professional jobs out there or moving on to bigger things . . . The solution is to get back to the idea of a permanent and strong volunteer base and also hiring farmworkers, with roots in their own communities as organizers . . . I don’t even want them to speak English. Now I want good farmworkers who will commit for the long term. But even then (other organizations) will come along and take our organizers here and there. The most enduring legacy is the UFW bread leaders like Eliseo Medina are now doing real important organizing across the



country . . . I was the first person to say that any kind of grower-worker collaboration is a bunch of bullshit and the only times that the farmers want to work with advocates or the union is in order ‘to get more slave labor’ . . . all those collaborative efforts do nothing but help growers, and maybe one or two workers but that’s it.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Politics of Helping**

As is often the case, I learned a great deal about what this project is about through the process of writing. As I sat down to write this conclusion I thought, I could summarize the arguments made in each chapter. I could rephrase my introduction, putting more emphasis on the research findings and their practical implications today. I could cut and paste. I could postulate on the future of philanthropy, social change, and farmworker organizing. However, instead, I am moved to write about what this dissertation is not about. This study is not about farmworkers. It is not really about poverty. It is in only in a marginal way about a social movement.

After writing five chapters, that span five decades, about philanthropic investments in farmworker communities across California's Central Valley, I realized that this dissertation tells mainly one story: the story of how funders and professionals, dreamers and planners, see themselves and how their visions and plans are negotiated and contested by those they invest in. It is about what the ideas and images communicated through foundation networks tell us about how professional practices, institutional arrangements, and large-scale projects are legitimized. It is also about how, due the distance from what is happening in the places they operate, they sometimes fail. The federal planners of the WPA and the professional staff of the Max L. Rosenberg Foundation defined themselves by the historic stand they took to address the migrant poverty sweeping the national imagination. The Self-Help projects in Tulare Country in the late 1950's and early 1960's tell us more about the ideas and practices spreading through funding circles than it does about what farmworkers and their families were experiencing, seeing, and thinking at this time. The emergence of the self-help model and the concretization of a community development theory tells us about how foundation professionals began to see themselves as more than donors: they became theorists, planners, even social movement agents. It tells us nothing of the ways in which farmworkers were already organized in informal 'comites' and support networks, of what they were already doing to help themselves.

Chapter Two, perhaps my favorite chapter to write, tells us more about how the staff at the Field Foundation viewed themselves, than it does about the

specific struggles of the United Farm Worker movement. The rich, and oftentimes heated, correspondence between Field Foundation program officer, Leslie Dunbar, and Cesar Chavez mostly revealed how foundations, and the people that worked within them, worked hard to see themselves as important actors in the social movements of the day, yet not as union advocates. That so many funders could express such deep appreciation for a movement based on workers' rights and dignity, yet withhold all funding to union organizing and strikes, belies a deeper dilemma in how funders view their role in civil society. From the perspective of the movement, this chapter taught me a profound lesson about the tightropes and landmines that movement leaders find themselves in as they battle to attain desperately needed resources while not letting the interests and perceptions of people and institutions of wealth alter the nature of the struggle. In this instance, the age-old dilemma of elite patronage found its way into the movement. With foundation grants came the funder's vision, laid upon the institutional spaces that the recipient must live within, a space emptied of what initially gave it life. Ultimately creating institutions to separate economic from social justice (the union from the movement) was a successful and even innovative strategy in the eyes of the donor, yet failed the movement.

Chapters Three through Five more obviously display how the dreams and disasters of philanthropic investments in farmworker organizing reflect the self-perceptions and legitimization of funders and planners. Chapter Three in particular demonstrated how program officers create specific ideologies and translate them into programming through the very process of exploring and interrogating their own beliefs and power as grant making agents. The program officer's dilemma, of how much she or he can let go of in order to get a community organizing or immigrant rights grant through to funding, is an exploration of the internal ethics of the professional. Some program officers could see themselves in this role, embracing participatory framings as a placeholder for an analysis of social and economic justice. Others lost themselves in the process and either quit or were fired for sticking to a principle.

Chapters Four and Five are as much about the ideologies and identities of program staff and philanthropic institutions as they are about the struggles of the movement organization collaborative partners. The vision of the IPC as a pluralistic immigrant civic participation network, that would organically form organizing agendas and mutual work, defined program officer Sibley and the Kinney Foundation much more than it did its partners. Before he

was ‘let-go’ from the foundation, Sibley won a high profile national foundation award for his work with the IPC. He believed that it was this award, marking him as both an innovator in immigrant grant making and naïve to the world of foundation politics, that flagged him as the next to go in the line of fire in the Kinney Foundation’s strategic downsizing. While the IPC also suffered when the Kinney funded ended, it was only Sibley whose success and failures were defined through the IPC.

In Chapter Five, Felipe Cordero, defined his work as an improvement or an innovation on Sibley’s IPC. However, as a trained public health expert, his grand visions for a complicated, multi-layered project proved even more problematic. Initially defining his success by the complexity of the model, Cordero made the planners’ mistake of neglecting the existing relationships, talents, strategies, and wisdom in the project region. Without ‘buy-in’ there was no progress; with all process there was no action. He also defined success based on the notion that consensus building between the poorest people in the United States and some of the wealthiest farmers in the world would produce a viable ‘win-win.’ Overwhelmed by the challenges, Cordero realized that the consensus building approach that he so enthusiastically defined himself by was not so easily achieved or, according to some, even desirable. Like the Kinney Foundation and the IPC, The Western Foundation decided that this was not a project they wanted to be defined by and dropped it.

Ideas of participatory development, of professionalization, and of collaboration and consensus define how funders view themselves by way of what they view ‘granted’ individuals and institutions as lacking. By saying that farmworkers problems can be solved through participation, funders are claiming that they are not already participating. By calling for professionalization and institution building, they are saying that local institutions don’t exist and that if they do, they are neither effective nor sustainable. By asking for collaboration, they are implying that existing institutions work in isolation. While these claims are not always accurate, they validate the work of foundations as making a mark in the world through their long history of intervention and organizing through civil society. What they don’t see, or disguise, through participatory and collaborative funding frameworks, are the local leaders, institutions, and support networks that have existed and evolved in Central Valley migrant communities for decades.

Upon reflection on my research, I realized that the real damage done in the historical moments that I have studied is that the knowledge produced by funders suggests that capable leaders, organizations, and institutional relationships don't exist in poor communities and therefore need to be developed. This production of knowledge has real life consequences. Termed 'epistemic violence' by Edward Said, the production of knowledge from the perspective of the donor, developer, program manager, or in Said's instance imperial colonialist, produces new systems of knowledge that erase or make invalid the knowledge that already lives in places where programs are implemented. As one interview subject put it, "They want us to collaborate, but we already all work together. Why do we have to now pretend that we don't and go to all these meetings on the foundations' terms, and accomplish nothing?"

A troubling consequence of this 'epistemic violence' was expressed by many of the people that I interviewed. They expressed feeling stuck, left without options, and hopeless that anyone could really address the poverty and marginalization maintained through industrial agriculture. They are anxious but not hopeful that the next round of funding will bring new opportunities to organize farmworkers and help the people that they see suffering on a daily basis. They are frustrated with having to work within 'the game' of speaking to foundation program guidelines, with organizing according to foundation designed initiatives, with the constant administrative management required of their growing, yet still struggling, institutions. They see no way out. A scarce few spoke of doing this work *without* foundation funding. With institutional structures to maintain, constituents to serve, and salaries to pay, this is simply the way that organizing got done, however ineffectively. In the context of the financial crisis and drought, they also saw no way to confront the un-monitored and still highly abusive agricultural system that both growers and migrant workers have come to rely upon.

Even as I found this research project deeply sobering, especially in terms of the despair and stuckness that long time movement leaders and institutions find themselves in, I still have much hope. My hope comes mainly from the few people that I met along the way that proposed that there is a different way of working, of seeing the world, and of enacting social change. Most of these people do not work for nonprofit organizations or foundations. They are mothers, soccer coaches, long time farmworkers, and a few caregivers. I found hope, tempered by deep concern, for these people that I met along the way in the rural agricultural communities across the Central Valley who are

helping one another, taking care of children, organizing for their rights in the face of ICE raids and deepening unemployment, on a daily basis with few resources and oftentimes threatened legal status. I am inspired by a woman I met in the town of Woodlake who told me that she keeps serving migrants at a local clinic because every time an old man or woman comes through the door, she thinks of her campesino father who, despite the chronic health problems of a fruit picker, worked the fields to a ripe age in order to pay her way through college. I am inspired by Rosa who, while taking care of my daughter while I conducted interviews and attended meetings, was also organizing youth gatherings, cultural events, and protests against the raids in her Mixteco community in Madera. I am inspired by Pablo Espinoza, who told me his story of coming to the Valley as a teenage migrant worker and being recruited to organize the protest against the tin roof housing that ignited the movement in 1964. His pleas for farmworker organizations to move away from their desks and paperwork, back to the fields and Laundromats to build a new organizing base, feel alive and possible every time I hear him speak.

Without listening to the people who still have passion, dreams, hope, and who are not consumed with grant reporting obligations and the next funding trend, we will not know what is really possible. For my next project I envision conducting in depth life histories of people engaged in what I am calling, *The Politics of Help*. These people are the people I described above, who without many resources are helping children and families in need, maintaining support networks across migrant communities, organizing events to protect the rights of others, and dreaming up their own ways of making a home in the Central Valley, the land of poverty amidst plenty. While working outside of institutions these people are not without leadership skills, networks, organizations, and community development practices. On the contrary, they have inherited and continue to build upon deep traditions of ‘helping.’

Where it gets complicated, and what I am interested in investigating, is when these ‘indigenous’ helpers are confronted with incorporated public, private, and nonprofit institutions. Through my research, I found these ‘indigenous’ helpers hotly sought after by organizing institutions in search of ‘authentic leaders’. They are also sometimes reprimanded for organizing actions or events that overstep the geographic and constituency boundaries that these organizations claim. In some instance this ‘Politics of Help’ is gendered and the helping woman is simultaneously congratulated for her volunteer public

service and organizational membership and reprimanded for her public leadership and organizing. Sometimes these helpers are successfully recruited by formal institutions and find the transition from being a helper to a professional very difficult. Others work multiple low wage jobs in order to support their ‘helping’ work. And yet others find their way into the private sector, supporting their helping work through insurance, money transfer, and credit schemes directed at migrants.

So the ‘grassroots’ helper is no panacea, and ‘the politics of help’ comes with its own set of paradoxes. While the rigidity or dependency of the nonprofit institutional model has come to stifle or redirect new organizing, without institutions individual helpers cannot get very far. Without resources, political legitimacy, formal constituents, connections beyond local communities, and the ability to affect broader policy change, helpers remain as just that –helpers but not organizers. While industrial agribusiness has its own lobbying institutions, deep connections to state and federal policy makers, and in some instances generous publically subsidized programs, it is destructive to propose that an extremely weaker party, migrant farmworkers, might be better off without institutions. On the contrary, institutions are central. Instead I propose that it is time for long standing social movement organizations to re-evaluate who they are truly representing and what kind of work they need to be doing to better serve their constituents. I also believe that it is time for new institutions to be built, and for federal and international agencies who care about eradicating poverty to take a look at ‘The Other California’ –the interior of a state often thought of as the land of opportunity yet where so many suffer without recognition. For my future research I am specifically interested in the different ways in which informal and semi-formalized ‘helpers’ view the possibilities for social change, and how their articulations of addressing poverty amidst plenty might inspire new ideas and strategies for addressing the migrant poverty and marginalization that has marked the Central Valley region since the inception of large-scale agriculture.

A final question that I have riddled with throughout this research project is whether the legacy of the Farm Worker Movement, and the existing historic farmworker institutions and the philanthropic support that they have received over the past several decades, has itself hindered new farmworker organizing. As proposed at the beginning of this dissertation, the unique combination of ideas, institutional structures, and relationships managed since the historic Farm Worker Movement has governed farmworker

organizing across the region. Might a different place, with a different history, and different social, political, economic, and geographic relationships see a new pathway to confronting the abuses perpetuated through industrial agriculture?

One example, in a very different place with a very different history, is the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida. In contrast to the UFW approach, CIW considers their work, ‘anti-slavery’ organizing. Without the history of an ethnically driven ‘La Causa’ and industrial unionization, CIW is designed as a community based organization comprised of mainly Latino, Mayan, and Haitian field workers, but also includes other low-wage workers from other sectors across the state of Florida. Like the Farm Worker Movement CIW’s goal is to fight for fair wages, stronger labor protections, and better housing and community infrastructure. However, CIW frames much of their work in the global context of indentured servitude. Their approach to addressing common withholding of pay, sexual abuse, harassment, poor conditions, and even literal slavery that still exist in agriculture is also framed in the now popular consumer context of ‘Fair Food’.

Farmworker organizers in the Central Valley, through the desperation of the agricultural economy and negotiations with growers around immigration reform, have made memorable omissions of what the early movement was fighting for, creating a picture of corporate agriculture reliant upon low-wage immigrant labor as an ‘inevitable’ reality. In contrast, the organizing campaigns of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers shows pictures of enslavement and abuse that ‘deform’ the totalizing picture of inevitable globalized markets and the dominance of low-wage, undocumented, regularly-abused migrant workers. Like Teatro Campesino at the height of the Farm Worker Movement, CIW engages new images and theatrical representations through multi-media and public demonstration. By using the right media, targeting specific audiences and exposing age old problems in new and relevant ways, CIW has successfully won legal cases against both growers and food outlets such as McDonalds and Chipotle who buy tomatoes from growers that abuse workers. The CIW has also articulated its organizing with the growing Slow Food Movement, taking environmentally conscious advocates to task to include the rights and well-being of workers in their messages of Slow Food and sustainability.



In stark contrast to the farmworker organizers I interviewed in California, CIW claims that in, “Immokalee today: Nothing is impossible.” Under the motto of “Consciousness + Commitment = Change” the CIW’s Campaign for Fair Food and anti-slavery work has transformed one of the poorest, most politically powerless communities in the country into, “ a new and important public presence with forceful, committed leadership directly from the base of our community - young, immigrant workers forging a future of livable wages and modern labor relations in Florida's fields.” In recognition of their work, “three CIW members were presented the prestigious 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, the first time the award had gone to a U.S.-based organization in its 20 years of existence.”<sup>115</sup> Placing their work in the context of global social movements the CIW has changed the agenda for farmworker organizing, using images and ideas that disrupt the picture of ‘nothing is possible’ and give hope to new generations of migrant activists. There are many places like Immokalee that give hope that a new movement will disrupt the story told in this dissertation.

Aligning farmworker rights, health, and safety with the slow food and food democracy movement is a particularly hopeful strategy. From Michael Pollan’s widely popular *Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006) and more recent book *In Defense of Food* (2009) to Alice Water’s edible school yard, to farmers’ markets and restaurants that serve locally grown organic foods popping up everywhere, the slow food movement has captured the public imagination. However, linking worker rights and conditions with the food movement has not been and will not be easy. In the 1970’s when Cesar Chavez launched an ‘organic produce’ campaign focusing on anti-pesticide organizing the UFW was swamped with a record number of calls from the general public. However, according to a long time farmworker organizer (Interview with David Villarino, 2008), a large majority of the callers were interested in where they could buy organic produce and not how they could participate in anti-pesticide organizing. The CIW was the only worker advocate organization presenting at the three-day Slow Food Nation conference in San Francisco in 2008. Of course if investigated I’m sure that CIW’s media savvy professionally trained staff and slow food framework will reveal it’s own unique paradoxes and limits. Slow food, alternately called food sustainability or food democracy, advocates are more concerned with the culture of eating, building personal responsibility and attacking common American diet related diseases such as Diabetes through the American

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.ciw-online.org>, site visited on September 2, 2009.

dinner table, small scale farming, and selling and buying local. These are all important causes. They are less interested in the conditions of workers in the large-scale export based farms, by far the most common form of agriculture in California, and where the overwhelming majority of California farmworkers labor. When attention has been paid to these farms, attention to worker conditions and rights has been insignificant. For example, the director of Roots of Change, a foundation initiated institutional collaborative to create a sustainable food system in California, told me that they were extremely close to reaching their sustainability goals (which at least on paper concern worker health, safety and rights) with growers in the Napa County grape industry (Interview with Michael Dimock 2007). This was the very same year that journalist David Bacon was promoting his new book and photo series picturing Oaxacan workers sleeping in drainage ditches surrounded Napa Valley vineyards (*Communities Without Borders* 2006). Like during the farmworker movement of the 1960's, aligning labor rights with a broader American social movement will not come easily. It will have to be fought for. The relationship between farmworker organizing and the food democracy movement is another area that I am interested in investigating in the future.

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