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The Power of Giving: Investigating the Shape of Private Philanthropy, a California Case Study

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### Author

Kohl, Erica

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## **The Power of Giving: Investigating the Shape of Private Philanthropy, a California Case Study**

### **Abstract**

This paper concerns the relationship between private philanthropy and social movements. At a time when the unions, social service and legal aide agencies, and other structures that supported social movements of the past are suffering declining resources and public legitimacy or are failing to move with the needs of the new working poor, privately funded non-profit organizations have become the primary vehicle for organizing poor and marginalized communities. Relatively few scholars have investigated the opportunities and consequences of the new model of philanthropic organizing. Drawing on post-Marxist Gramscian theory, studies in governmentality, and feminist materialism this paper outlines a theoretical framework and research agenda for investigating large philanthropic initiatives. It is proposed that California's Central Valley, a place sharply defined by the production of poverty through industrial agriculture, provides a useful lens for looking at how philanthropic initiatives re-organize and depoliticize the work of groups originally founded to address issues such as unfair labor practices, pesticide waste, and other abuses by large-scale farmers. It is argued, based on preliminary research<sup>1</sup>, that private foundations manage the work of granted organizations through program frameworks that put poor people at the center of their own salvation while excluding reference to the power structures and economic relationships that created the situations they seek to ameliorate. Ultimately, this project is concerned with what the rise of large-scale private philanthropic initiatives has to do with the current moment in which political, social, and economic agendas are overwhelmingly dominated by alliances of global capital.

### **Introduction**

“The most melancholy of human reflections, perhaps, is a question of whether the benevolence of mankind does most harm or good.” (Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* – as cited in Ben Whitaker's *Philanthropoids*, 1974)

“Foundations are bizarre beasts. They are created to solve societal problems by using inordinate amounts of wealth –wealth that is inherently contradictory because it was gleaned out of the structural inequality that it proposes to address.” (Foundation Program Officer, San Francisco, 2005)

In 2005 Robert Reich addressed Northern California Grantmakers on the topic of the increasing divide between the nation's rich and poor.<sup>2</sup> Speaking to a room full of foundation professionals Reich claimed that the growing economic inequality in the United States is a, “crisis that threatens the very fabric of our democracy.” He proposed that at the root of this crisis are three culprits: corporate capitalism, technological innovation, and immigration. Capitalism for its unchecked expansion that values corporate profit over human well being and equality; technological transformations that, alongside corporate capitalism, displace, abuse and control workers around the world; and immigration, not only

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<sup>1</sup> The author conducted interviews with Foundation and non-profit professionals and observed at foundation gatherings as a part of an exploratory research project (Northern and Central California, 2004-2005) on the strategies and dilemmas of social change philanthropy.

<sup>2</sup> Reich was the keynote speaker at the 2005 Northern California Grantmakers (a membership organizations of northern Californian foundations) annual meeting. I attended this event as a participant observer.

from outside the borders of the United States but also across domestic regions, that unsettles labor patterns, availability of social services, and affordable real estate and costs of living.

After a generous round of applause from the audience, Reich was asked how private philanthropy could address the increasing gap between the rich and poor. His answer was unexpected by this outside participant observer: “Investing in early childhood education,” he claimed “is one of the surest ways to help those at the bottom gain at least a chance of rising up to the top.” While by no means a bad thing, early childhood education did not appear as the most logical solution to the root problems outlined in Reich’s keynote speech, as perhaps increased minimum wage, international labor laws, corporate accountability, or educating and organizing workers might. I looked around the room to see if others recognized the incongruity. While not overly surprised by a politician proposing an individual mobility solution to a structural problem, I was taken aback by the enthusiastic and uncritical support of Reich’s proposal by the ‘progressive’ foundation program officers in the room.

Subsequent interviews with foundation professionals in Northern California revealed how education, civic participation, community health, and an array of ‘non-threatening’ funding strategies are increasingly sought after by foundation staff fearful of predominantly businessmen boards of trustees who will not touch grant proposals that contain structural analysis of inequity or strategies that imply holding ‘business’ accountable. Education and participation framings that speak to the enduring American ideals of individual mobility, hard work, and merit are commonly well received and become useful programmatic framings for those aiming to address deeper questions of inequity. Embedded within Reich’s proposal and its reception at the Northern California Grantmakers’ annual meeting 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. Not only does this dance move the solution away from the roots of the problem, it also causes great anxiety for politically conflicted foundation program officers. One program officer, nearing resignation from her position, put it this way,

“My personal belief is so different from the board that I always need to read 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 . . . 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.” (Program Officer Interviews, Spring 2005)

As foundation program officers traverse the worlds of both the powerful (foundation leadership) and the powerless (in the case of the proposed research, migrant farmworkers in California’s Central Valley), foundation professionals create narratives of poverty and salvation that speak to multiple and often conflicting interests across institutions, sectors, geographic regions and shifting political climates. Once program frameworks are developed and grants are made, foundation staff and consultants enter an ongoing negotiation to position wealth against inequity.

The above story and quote touch on the practical ways in which societal problems are re-framed around dominant discourses (Fraser 1990) and policy frameworks, depoliticizing and individualizing the experiences of subordinate groups. These processes of compromise and incorporation are not new to modern politics. For example, Piven and Cloward’s now classic *Poor People’s Movements* (1977) shows how America’s major social movements have been limited by the emergence of bureaucratic

organizations that are constrained by the particular social and capitalist contexts that govern them: how during the labor and civil rights movements, “if industrial workers had demanded public ownership of factories, they would probably still have gotten unionism . . . and if impoverished southern blacks had demanded land reform, they would probably still have gotten the vote.” (Piven and Cloward: p.33). What is new is the increasingly powerful role private philanthropy plays in reframing social change agendas in ways that compliment rather than confront the current climate of post-welfare individual ‘responsibilization’ and free market expansion. In this paper I claim that the private grant making foundation is a central and under-studied site in which the political negotiations and compromises of social movements take place. I also show, based on preliminary research, how philanthropic ‘theories of change’ and patterns of professionalization and depoliticization often result in foundations failing to address the problems they set out to cure: how an initiative in California’s Central Valley strives to improve farm worker health yet will not take on the long standing pesticide poisoning, unfair labor practices, and below minimum wages that have kept farmworkers living in unhealthy conditions for decades.

I begin by reviewing current thinking on the role of philanthropy in society, drawing on the work of scholars of social movements, poverty studies, political science, and Gramscian educational theory. In the following section I propose that studies in governmentality and materialist feminism complicate current frameworks for studying philanthropy and suggests four areas of philanthropic control (or in the best case scenario, opportunities for shaping new organizing trajectories): 1. Philanthropic knowledges or ‘theories of change’, 2. Professionalization and ‘capacity building’, 3. Monetary relationships and re-granting structures, and 4. Funder-driven collaborative partnerships.

### **Philanthropy and Power: a review of current scholarship**

A long time program officer from a major California foundation explains philanthropy through the tale of Frodo and the Ring. In Tolkien’s classic *Lord of the Rings* (1974) 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. Philanthropic institutions, this veteran foundation staff 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 set 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.” (Program Officer Interviews, Spring 2005)

The 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 (See resource mobilization theory: McCarthy and Zald, 1977, Haines 1984, Jenkins 1986) and by educational and political theorists concerned with the controlling nature of elite patronage (Piven and Cloward 1977, Arnove 1980). Since the early 1990’s, in the context of increasing privatization and shrinking public welfare systems, activists and scholars have argued that the multitude of organizations supported by private philanthropy function as a “shadow state” (Wolch 1990, Gilmore 2004) or powerful “state apparatus” (Roelofs 2003) that increasingly control social change movements through social problems and poverty ideologies that promote individual improvement and participation over structural analysis of inequity (Joseph 2001, Cruickshank 1999, Hyatt 2001, O’Connor 2001). Organizers and non profit staff have become keenly aware of the challenges to finding foundations that will support work to confront the root problems

associated with the growing economic and political inequities of our time. In the interest of attaining resources for poor communities, maintaining professional careers and institutions, and opening up spaces for new political alliances and opportunities many organizers, staff, consultants, and foundation program officers learn to negotiate a conservative political paradigm as they work with foundations.

This pattern is also not unique to the United States. With the expansion of global capital, Western business and non-profit models, government privatization, and shrinking public welfare systems around the world, international social activism and education is also increasingly directed by non-profit organizations and private philanthropy (Edelman 2001, Keck and Sikkink 1998). During the neoliberal restructuring of the 1980's and early 1990's 'participatory' self-help and empowerment approaches also became widely popular with the World Bank and a wide array of international development agencies (Peet 2003, Weber 2002, Goldman 2005). The growing number of domestic and global social change movements dependent on philanthropic leadership offers both opportunities and risks: opportunities to gather resources and skills necessary to build strategic alliances and affect political change; and risks associated with professionalization and institutionalization of organizing strategies; foundations' short term funding cycles, grant competitions that make coalition building increasingly difficult, and granting requirements that limit what people can or cannot say and do.

While most scholarship on philanthropy concludes that private foundations play a positive role in nurturing social progress and civic democracy, (Sealander 1997, Jenkins 1998, Bremner 1980, Van Til 1990, Weaver 1967) a handful have made critical structural arguments that prove helpful in theorizing the politics of philanthropy (Keppel 1930, Lundberg 1937, Coon 1938, Karl and Katz 1977, Arnove 1980, Roelof 2003). Inspired by the groundbreaking collection of essays in *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism* (Arnove 1980), Joan Roelofs' *Foundations and Public Policy: the Mask of Pluralism* (2003) provides 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 conceived of as dissenting, such as 'empowerment' or 'community action' are neutralized and incorporated into new non-threatening ideologies and programs that replace 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.' Often times 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 in the current era waters down and redirects more radical community organizing and is inevitably complicit in reproducing subjectivities and conditions that protect the free market economy. Paying attention to the connective and educative role of the 'public intellectual' and the network of institutions they work

through is particularly useful in understanding how foundations promote ideas and programs that manage and maintain inequality. However, most critics fail to explain the specific contradictions, debates and alternative strategies taking shape within philanthropy and the non-profit sector. Arnove and Roloefs' work in particular leaves us feeling trapped within the grips of 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 contradictions, openings, and political opportunities, as a Gramscian framework might suggest, their work only answers a limited range of questions.

Stuart Hall's notion of 'articulation' (Hall 1985, Li 2000) reminds us that, in keeping with a more dialectical framework, ideological and strategic articulations and alliances are never fixed and are always open to constant re-appropriation. And how power and actions to confront that power can constitute one another. Programs framed by foundations may contain elements of alternatives to the dominant framework they represent, and may be understood and used differently across the organizations and networks involved in funded initiatives. For example, there are a handful of radical staff inside foundations that know what boards of directors will and won't fund and find ways to re-frame radical organizing approaches in ways that 'get a yes' under certain terms and conditions and then encourage grantees on the ground to take the work in the originally intended direction. There are also professionals in the non-profit sector who know how to 'spin' a good grant proposal and consciously strive to prevent their work from being directed by funders. And then there are those who simultaneously hold a structural analysis of inequity yet believe that pluralist or individualistic approaches to building civil society work best during certain political moments.

Scholars of philanthropy have also failed to pay much attention to the professional 'theories of change', institutional techniques and practices, and oftentimes conflicted professional identities that shape funding trends and program frameworks.<sup>3</sup> I propose that by researching a set of foundations within a regional grantmaking context (California's Central Valley) and their professional networks across the state and nation we will find that philanthropy controls and embeds community organizing and development within mainstream institutions and markets while simultaneously breaking open new space for alternative political alliances and organizing trajectories. Preliminary ethnographic research conducted in 2004-2005 on specific philanthropic ideas, practices, and relationships across California's Central Valley contributes to a more complicated understanding of philanthropy and society – one where relationships of power are fluid, at once controlling and containing elements of alternatives to the dominant framework.

## **Project Framework and Preliminary Findings; Developing a Research Agenda**

### Research Context

A major California foundation is launching a five-year initiative to address the extreme poverty and resulting poor health experienced in Central Valley's migrant communities. For the purpose of this paper, I will call the initiative the Farmworker Health Project (FHP). The main funder, who will be called The Health Foundation (HF), is committing \$50 million dollars over five years to this Central Valley initiative. According to an evaluation consultant to the project<sup>4</sup>, the foundation program officer in charge is framing the work in terms of 'building the social capital' of migrant communities and connecting them to services, health care, housing, and insurance providers. In 2005 I began to research

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<sup>3</sup> This theme is taken up in the next section.

<sup>4</sup> Interviewed as a part of the 2004-2005 exploratory research project previously mentioned.

the Central Valley farm worker initiative as a jumping off point for investigating the web of philanthropic ideas, professionals, strategies, and relationships across the region, state, and nation.

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 2005).<sup>5</sup> 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 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 frame the physical 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, private investors, national think tanks and media networks, play a role in constituting power dynamics -how people, ideas, and resources are organized and re-organized over time. California's Central Valley, a place sharply defined by the production of poverty through industrial agriculture, provides a useful lens for looking at how philanthropic initiatives re-organize and de-politicize the work of groups originally founded to address issues such as unfair labor practices, pesticide waste, and other abuses by large-scale farmers.

#### Preliminary Findings and Future Areas of Investigation

This research project addresses the larger question of the relationship between private philanthropy and social movements: to what extent private foundations have successfully taken on the concerns of the poor and under-represented? Or conversely, how they have co-opted leaders and organizations, setting up new ways of working that do not upset global capitalist development. In order to investigate these questions with an openness to finding the messier, political negotiation in between I compliment the dialectical Gramscian framework arrived at above with methodological considerations suggested by studies in governmentality (Rose 1999, Foucault 1991, Watts 2003, Ferguson and Gupta 2002) and materialist feminism (Fraser 1990 and 1994, Gordon 1990, Naples, 1997). This section lays out the ways in which studies in governmentality and materialist feminism complicate a Gramscian theoretical framework aided an investigation of four central philanthropic processes: 1. Philanthropic knowledges or ‘theories of change’, 2. Professionalization and ‘capacity building’, 3. Monetary relationships and re-granting structures, and 4. Funder-driven collaborative partnerships.

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, capacity building, evaluations, collaborative partnerships, and program 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.

What this approach adds to a Gramscian understanding of the political negotiations in civic society is a methodological focus on tracing and dissecting the specific ideas, theories of change, and strategies produced and spread in the philanthropic sector. In the context of the study of philanthropic investments in Central Valley immigrant and migrant communities one central area of investigation focuses on the professional theories of change engaged and asks:

1. What are the dominant ideas of immigrant health and community development used by foundation professionals? How did they emerge and how do they reproduce or challenge configurations of power and control?

In addressing this question, I began by looking at how foundation professionals framed the funding initiative to address conditions for immigrants in California in the economically conservative and post 9/11 political climate. What I found is that the program officer responsible for the FHP is attempting to shape the initiative through the framework of building social capital and organizing migrant communities, an approach not well received by foundation leadership who would prefer to stick with direct service delivery. I then began to trace, ‘*how* social capital and community organizing is being framed and used and to what end?’ For example: is the purpose of organizing and building social capital in migrant farm worker settlements to build an alternative power base (which is how many farm worker organizers understand the terms from the 1960’s farmworker movement), enabling partners and constituents to take the project in any direction they choose such as holding farmers accountable for pesticide waste, lack of toilets and clean water in the fields, and below minimum wages that prevent families from eating healthfully? Or is the social capital and organizing framework appropriated from its original ‘community directed’ origins and limited to enrolling farm worker families in health education courses and insurance and medical plans?

Archival research of program reports and interviews with project consultants revealed that the initiative is framing a social capital *both* in terms of building and immigrant organizing base, and as a vehicle for increased health prevention education and service provision, depending on who the reports or the program officer is talking to. A preliminary research report for the project, conducted by a rural research and advocacy organization contracted by the foundation, identified pesticide poisoning, low wages, labor contractor abuses, and substandard housing as key issues that farmworkers and advocates must confront in improving farmworker health. This report was widely distributed among farmworker advocate groups and non-profit organizations. In a subsequent project report, resulting from the deliberations of an executive task force coordinated by the foundation (comprised of agricultural leaders, foundation staff, state legislators, and farm worker researchers and advocates) failed to mention any of the above problems and instead concluded, “after a grueling consensus process,” that ‘building farmworker community capital’ to receive diabetes and drug prevention education, service provision, and health insurance coverage would be the main target areas for the funding initiative. What happened in between the hard-hitting research document and the more mainstream task force recommendations might be an avenue to explore as this research project continues.

On the ground the program officer is also negotiating different understandings of a social capital framework as he tries to get the initiative off the ground. According to an evaluation consultant to the initiative:



“The main program officer is a risk taker. But the evaluation of this effort which is currently being designed mainly wants 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, especially because there will be no rapid results. Right now he is trying to restate the critical issues of farmworker health, safety, and things around ‘building capital’ to ensure future health . . . he is currently designing a broad coalition to build social capital using a popular education and community organizing framework . . . There may eventually be some major breakdowns by not asking farm workers how they define success or results in the end. There are many risks to the foundation diluting the work. The board really wants service providers and the program officer is bringing on some community organizers. And then the conservative growers he is bringing on board have a whole different set of interests. So the shape of the program and the argument for the work is constantly shifting.”

According to the evaluation consultant, as the program officer negotiates the framework for the initiative the hardest sell will be the “conservative growers” who currently have no reason to pay more attention to farm worker health than they already do. The second hardest sell, he guesses, may be the foundation board who would prefer a health service program to a ‘social capital building’ framework. But the social capital story of farm workers coming together to help one another may still be his best bet for pushing beyond a direct services model and enabling the program officer to get the initiative ‘passed’ to implementation. This framework may also broaden the types of groups engaged. Yet it is not clear what they will ultimately be engaged in.

Another site where professional theories of change are developed and spread is through relationships with other foundation professionals, national funder networks and public intellectuals. Several foundation 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 is Michael Fix and Jeff Passel’s Urban Institute reports such as “We the People” that during the conservative 1990’s made a significant shift away from rights and ‘angry advocacy’ framings to “Immigrant Integration” ideas that promote civic engagement, leadership and skills development. 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 direct framings of immigration and worker rights she was familiar with from her past life as an advocate. Eventually, she called upon an Urban Institute Reports (*We the People*) 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.”

How foundation staff take hold of and implement ideas, social theories, and organizing approaches as they negotiate new funding initiatives will be a central part of future research, including under what ideas and frameworks the FHP was originally conceptualized and launched.

What studies in governmentality do not do well is ask how these ideas and practices produce categories and understandings of race, gender, and class that have real life consequences. How do funding or development initiatives reproduce or create new ways of seeing oneself as a professional in the 'improvement project' or as a part of the 'problem' to be addressed? Feminist theory proposes ways to look at race, class, and gender subjectivities that support development frameworks. Or just as importantly, positions and identities that people take on that confront or change the dominant framework. Nancy Fraser (1990) suggests that by looking closely at the officially recognized kinds of language used within certain professional or policy circles, the styles of argumentation, the stories told that make up individual and collective identities, and the ways these forms 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) In simpler terms, how might the female program officer be received and positioned in comparison to a male program officer in the context of designing a large-scale initiative and gaining approval from a predominantly white businessmen board? What is it about being female or male that provides more or less access and legitimacy? How might a Latino male program officer face multiple and conflicting positions as he works with Mexican farm workers, white female health care professionals, and white male professionals at the foundation? How might the farm workers wives see themselves fitting into a project that tells them to be the 'promotoras' of health and well being to their farm worker men that according to the project need to be educated and 'made healthy'? How do they fit into the intended design of the foundation initiative and what new do they bring to the range of unintended or possible outcomes?

Considerations of the promoted and discouraged professional styles, ways of working, and identities suggests that a second central area of investigation include practices of professionalization and participant training that shape program officer and participant identities and daily work. In the language of foundation initiatives this means addressing various forms of 'Capacity Building' and asking:

2) How are leaders, participants, and organizational practices changed in relationships with large scale funding initiatives such as the FHP? How do they take on or resist the roles and identities prescribed?

One way in which individuals and organizations are changed through funding initiatives is through what foundations call 'Capacity Building.' Many large foundations do not make grants less than \$50,000 and worry that they can not extend their reach "down to the grassroots" to unincorporated or small organizations with minimal budgets without "building the capacity" of local groups to receive larger grants. There are relatively few non-profit organizations in the Central Valley, as compared to the Bay Area and Southern California, and foundations like the HF 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 expand the possibilities for the FHP, the HF made a grant to a smaller foundation (Capacity Builder) to 'build the capacity of smaller immigrant groups' across the Valley." According to the program officer of the Capacity Builder foundation. While the program officer of the HE develops the larger framework and brings on the main partners of the initiative, the Capacity Builder program officer spends time building the capacity of smaller groups to apply for funding once they are 'ready.' She describes the bulk of the 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 large scale financial management, accounting, etc. so that they can handle larger grants . . .for example, the HE told us that if we spend the time building the capacity of (grassroots organization) 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 ‘Capacity Building’ technique simultaneously provides greater access to resources and power for small organizing groups like the ‘grassroots organization’ mentioned above and in the process changes the nature of the work. A woman who works with the ‘grassroots organization’ mentioned above shared that she now finds herself, “stuck doing desk work and not organizing anymore.” She explained how she is grateful that her organization now has larger programs and more funds and legitimacy but is fearful that it is no longer addressing the changing needs of the farmworker communities they claim to serve. And that she feels disconnected - more like an office worker than someone involved in her own community.

An important aspect of capacity building is the large amount of consultants, trainers, and program developers hired by foundations to teach groups new languages and management techniques. Another non-profit staff person explained how a consultant was hired by a program officer to revise their ESL and Citizenship class curriculum which after much time and money ended up being, “so abstract, using all this high language that none of us understood or connected with. We were supposed to implement it but it sounded crazy. We didn’t want to tell the foundation so we just went ahead and re-did everything.” In this case they rejected capacity building that did not fit local conditions or identities.

The words of these organizers show their keen awareness of how foundation language, management skills, and organizational development better enables them to get grants to ideally fund more organizers but simultaneously requires that they change the way they work – oftentimes spending more time on management and reporting that dilutes the ‘real organizing.’ These choices are hard to make when capacity building can prevent local groups from losing grant competitions to the many Bay Area and Southern California groups and consultants commonly paid to do research, advocacy, and service work in the Valley. Many feel that it’s a “learn to play the game or get ripped off” set of choices. Questions of capacity building, professionalization, co-optation, and subject formation will be addressed by researching the workshops, trainings, and sites where organizational capacity building is taking place with FHP partners. Many organizations receive funding and training from multiple regional, statewide, and national foundations. Identifying these connections may help to reveal where professional frameworks converge or conflict and will be a central area for future research.

Because many of the relationships and organizing identities shaped by large initiatives like the FHP involve complex ‘re-granting structures’ preliminary research also asked:

3) How financial relationships between larger and smaller granted organizations play into the process of philanthropic management and control? How do they open up resources and spaces for alternative organizing?

A strategy commonly used while launching large-scale initiatives in regions like the Central Valley is to make large grants to one or two local or regional organizations who then re-distribute the funds and program work to smaller organizations. The FHP has set up a re-granting relationship with a major U.S. charity from its office in the south Valley. Like capacity building efforts, this strategy enables the

program officer to engage more groups and potentially increase the reach and impact of the initiative. Much like the dilemmas associated with capacity building, this approach enables more and smaller groups to attain resources, ideally connect up with one another through the re-granting relationship, and form strategic alliances. It also significantly changes the nature of the work and how organizations perceive one another. The director of an organization responsible for convening grassroots immigrant organizations who received funds from one such re-granting program in the Valley describes the controlling nature of re-granting efforts,

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 as the (Foundation), always asking us for money and resources and have a certain kind of expectation from us that makes it difficult for us to 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 the new local ‘host agency’ or facilitator.

However, not all relations are structured around financial obligations and reporting between agencies. Collaborative partnerships are also a common structure promoted by foundation initiatives and suggested a fourth area of investigation:

#### 4) How do foundation selected collaboratives or partnerships and alliances help or hinder organizing trajectories across the region and beyond?

Foundation driven collaboratives and partnerships offer perhaps the most possibilities but also pose the most risk. The program officer of the HF’s may succeed at solidifying collaborative relationships to achieve improved health conditions for migrant laborers but may also ultimately end up re-directing regional organizing on behalf of farm workers under a narrow and tightly managed foundation initiative. One interviewee expresses these concerns,

“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 or could not together decide how to address all the abuses after 9/11, the Patriot Act and everything. Instead we are all meeting to figure out how to get money from the next big thing. If we are really interested in important things we would be organizing not going to the HF to change our work and focus on their definition of health.”

According to the evaluation consultant working on the HF initiative, most of the smaller partners are coming together primarily for the money. From his 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 recruits partners and solicits

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 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, the cbo’s, the growers, the hired consultants, and the health service agencies before landing on a plan of action. And again, there are likely more than one regional, statewide or even national foundation initiatives in the Valley that immigrant organizations are responding to, each with its own set of ideas and program practices. These links will be traced and connected up in future research.

One organizer interviewed makes a point central to the question of the possibilities and limits to foundation driven collaboratives,

“You know, the biggest problem was that we could not pick our own partners. All these kinds of projects would work so much better if we could just decide that. We know who we can work with and how we can help each other. We also know who we don’t like. Like that evangelical group, you know who I mean, from Fresno . . .I don’t know why they were selected to join. “

This concern begs the larger question of whether social movements can even be seeded from philanthropic partnerships that might not allow for the identify formation, shared purpose, common enemy, and convergence of political imperatives most movements emerge from (Castells 1977). In the words of organizers reflecting on the historic farmworker movement<sup>6</sup>:

“During the movement I remember how all fights for justice were clear and integrated. I sat at a table with the Vietnam War protestors, the Panthers selling their papers, and us selling the Chicano movement paper, ‘El Macreados, the misbehavers . . .or the badly reared ones . . . before foundations we were the fuel, there was no reporting, no guidelines, no separation – just doing what had to do. The redirecting and compromising to they way we need to get funding takes time and energy away from the work. It slows us down.” -Chicano and Farmworker Movement organizer, Sacramento, CA

“Before we had our goals up front, now they have to be hidden. Before we knew everyone we worked with very well and who we worked against . . .it was about being where we needed to be at the right time . . . and now its about loose affiliations and vague partnerships. Funded organizations and programs started coming in and throwing out all the people that give this place life. Killing the militant in the artist.” -Theater Director and Past UFW Organizer, Fresno, CA

These organizers clearly articulate some of the ingredients and climate for movement building, missing in the current philanthropic organizing paradigm. However, it is also possible that in the current context unlikely ‘foundation driven’ alliances present new ways of addressing stuck political agendas. This project investigates the kinds of alliances and campaigns FHP partners are and are not able to form

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<sup>5</sup> Organizers quoted were also interviewed during the 2004-2005 exploratory research project on philanthropy and social change.

within and outside of the formal initiative. And what this ultimately says in terms of the relationship between the current philanthropic organizing model in this 'post social movement' time.

## Summary

In summary, building upon a fluid and open Gramscian understanding of the role philanthropy in society with the theoretical and methodological contributions of governmentality and feminist materialism, I propose four levels of ongoing research: the first concerns investigating the 'Knowledge / Truth Paradigms', that make people act a certain way. Investigating the bodies of knowledge foundations promote through program frameworks, grant reports, evaluation tools, and public discourse reveals the behaviors and practices people are positioned to adopt (or contest) in their daily lives through grant making programs. Secondly, by investigating the processes of professionalization or 'Capacity Building' in spaces such foundation conferences, capacity building workshops, and initiative gatherings research uncovers how individuals and organizations are positioned and sometimes changed through engagement with philanthropic initiatives. By directly observing the 'Experts and Professional Techniques' -the styles, strategies approaches, positions, and subjectivities of the sometimes-conflicted professionals we see how relationships are built, ideas are promoted or challenged, and programs are implemented on the ground. A third area of investigation concerns how financial relationships between granted organizations changes alliance building and organizing trajectories across the region. And finally, by following how philanthropic collaboratives are formed and what the re-organized partners are and are not able to accomplish together we get closer to answering how philanthropy intersects with past and emergent social movements and organizing trajectories. Ultimately, by conducting ethnographic research and connecting up patterns across all four levels philanthropy can be studied as a lively site or "power node" that translates, legitimates, and connects the knowledge, technologies, and spaces of governance and social change.<sup>7</sup>

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